

FASHIONING PERFORMANCE CAREERS IN NEW YORK, 1869-1899:
HOW FEMALE PERFORMERS NEGOTIATED CHANGING IDEAS OF WOMANHOOD

by

CELIA BRAXTON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
2011

© 2011

CELIA BRAXTON

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 6, 2010

Date

Chair of Examining Committee
Judith Milhous
Distinguished Professor

December 6, 2010

Date

Executive Officer
David Savran
Distinguished Professor

Kathleen D. McCarthy
Professor

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter,
Myim Rose Chalfen Gant
1971-2006.

Abstract

FASHIONING PERFORMANCE CAREERS IN NEW YORK, 1869-1899:
HOW FEMALE PERFORMERS NEGOTIATED CHANGING IDEAS OF WOMANHOOD

by

Celia Braxton

Advisor: Judith Milhous

Although they worked outside the home, the majority of nineteenth-century female performers built careers within, not in spite of, domestic ideology. Their choice contrasts with those of their more transgressive sisters, like Sarah Bernhardt, who flouted the ideal. This study of over seven hundred women who performed in New York City during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century examines how they created careers and public characters by combining values found within domestic ideology with changes in the notions of womanhood brought about by the experience of the Civil War.

Analysis of the database for this project reveals that after the war, there was an influx into the theatrical profession of young women from the middle classes. This changed the culture of the theatrical field, as well as the ways women from theatrical backgrounds presented themselves. The reasons women gave for entering theatre also changed, from redemptive reasons to reasons of choice.

But the collective experiences of the Civil War, combined with the need for many women to support themselves, also contributed to a new spirit of female independence exemplified by the assumption of independent agency by female stars. Cultural discomfort with the idea of independent businesswomen was played out in the press, as theatrical managers attempted to convince female performers of the folly of managing their own careers. As a group, female

performers became a lightning rod for discussion of the growing independence of women generally.

The dissertation concludes by examining the careers of three lesser known performers of the late nineteenth-century who used domestic ideology to their career advantage: Georgia Cayvan, who grew from working-class roots to become the leading lady of the Lyceum Theatre; Louisa Eldridge, who used the ideals of domestic womanhood to create a public character that complimented her career as character actress; and Fanny Davenport, producer and director of one of the largest theatrical combination companies of the last twenty years of the nineteenth century.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the help and assistance of numerous people and institutions. My advisor, Judith Milhous, showed a continuing confidence in my abilities. Her sharp eye and incisive comments have been an immense help during both the research and the writing of this dissertation. I thank Dr. Kathleen McCarthy, from the History program, for agreeing to sit on my committee, for her constant encouragement, and for spurring me to deeper research by her questions, suggestions, and comments regarding U.S. women's history. David Savran, too, has provided extremely helpful comments and suggestions. The entire committee manifested great patience with and concern for me during the dissertation process, which was interrupted by the illness and death of my daughter. Their support, and the support of Lynette Gibson, Assistant Program Officer, was also invaluable during that time.

The research for this project could not have been done without financial support. The Houghton Library, Harvard University, granted me the Stanley J. Kahrl Fellowship in Theatre History which enabled me to spend a full month in the Harvard Theatre Collection archives. I thank Susan and Jim Butler, of Brookline, Massachusetts, for inviting me into their home during that period, and allowing me to return whenever I have needed to check something at HTC. The Graduate Studies and University Center of the City University of New York provided me with a CUNY Research Grant, the Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Dissertation Award, and a Writing Fellowship, all of which helped finance the research that built the database upon which this dissertation is based.

In addition to the librarians and staff at the Harvard Theatre Collection, I must thank the research librarians and the staff of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, who recognized the size of my research endeavors and made several suggestions and adjustments to help me complete it. Danielle was particularly helpful in helping to adjust some of the rules and regulations in the interests of research efficiency. I would also like to thank the staff of the Firestone Library, Princeton University, who reacted to my requests to see most of what was a basically uncatalogued collection with interest, information, and access. The collection has since been catalogued. The staff at the Harry Ransome Center, in Austin Texas, the first archive I had ever visited, was more helpful than I knew in pulling for me just the number of records from the list I sent them that I would be able to get through during the four days I was to be there.

I would also like to thank Dr. Benito Ortolani, who encouraged me to apply to the Theatre program in the first place, and Pamela Sheingorn, who was Executive Officer my first several years in the program and always evinced interest and encouragement.

Finally, but by no means last in my thoughts, I must thank my dear friend Ann Robins for her support in many more ways than one, and my brother, Paul Brown, for his encouragement and emotional support through this lengthy process. I also must thank my roommate, Lisa Stokes, who has always checked to make sure I was “here” rather than in the nineteenth century before speaking to me when we met up in the kitchen; Roberta Nobleman, LMT and friend, who has offered me numerous free massages that I have not had the time to accept; and the community of women at St. Mary’s-Manhattanville Episcopal Church, who have laid their hands on me many times over the past three years when I felt I was flying apart. Without the support of these wonderful friends and others I’m sure I have left out, this project would not have been completed.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	xii
Introduction	1
The Centrality of Domestic Ideology for Women and Men in the Nineteenth Century	2
The Importance of the Immediate post-Civil War Period	13
Methodology of the Study	15
Chapter One: Where the Female Performers Came From	26
American Women at Work	28
Ethnic Background of Female Performers in New York City	33
Family Economic/Professional Background	39
British and U.S. Actresses Compared	42
Comparison with Benjamin McArthur’s Study	50
The Importance of Mothers	52
Performance Training and Formal Education	58
Conclusion	78
Chapter Two: The Changing Story of Why Women Became Performers	80
Reasons for Embarking on a Career in Theatre	82
A family business	86
Entering from the outside	90
Theatres, Prostitution, and the Performer’s Reputation	93
“I was bent on being an actress...”	100
The Re-invention of Family Background	104

The Middle-Class Influx and Theatre Culture	108
The middle-class influx and its effect on theatrical natives	112
The actress and the sacralization of theatre	115
Conclusion	118
Chapter Three: “On a Perfect Equality with Man”? Theatrical	
“Family” Relationships	120
Expectations of Female Service and Subservience	121
The subservient female in theatre	121
The subservient female within U.S. culture	128
Touring and Starring	131
The New Importance of the Female Audience	135
Controlling the Female Star	136
Divorce	145
Conclusion	169
Chapter Four: Redemptive Womanhood As a Model For a Theatre Career	
The Redemptive Woman in the New Industrial Family: Georgia Cayvan	171
Creating a Public Character Using New and Old Ideals of Womanhood:	
“Aunt” Louisa Eldridge	190
Conclusion	202
Chapter Five: “America’s Foremost Star and Attraction:” Fanny Davenport	
Building an image	205
Self-management and marriage	222
The Sardou plays	227

Fanny Davenport, Manager and Producer	240
Conclusion	262
Appendix I	268
Appendix II	274
Bibliography.....	279

LIST OF TABLES

1: Total unduplicated female performers found in Odell	17
2: Total records looked up	20
3: Percent of actresses in database born per decade	24
I.1: Women in entertainment as a percentage of working women (age 10+)	28
I.2: Women as a percent of the entertainment field	29
I.3: Women in Odell in more than one decade	33
I.4: Birth country of persons employed in show business, 1880 v. 1870	35
I.5: Parentage of U.S.-born actresses	38
I.6: Occupations of fathers of female performers, Great Britain v. U.S.	43
I.7: Breakdown of fathers' professions in Baker's database, by debut year	43
I.8: Chronological comparison of fathers' occupations, British v. U.S. female performers	44
I.9: U.S. female performers in Odell—fathers' occupations by season listed	47
I.10: Parents' occupations, U.S. performers	51
I.11: Comparison of mothers' and fathers' occupations by birth decade of actress	56
I.12: U.S. female performers in Odell—mothers' occupations by season listed	57
I.13: Performance training/manner of entering show business	59
I.14: Performance training by birth decade	59
I.15: Performance training compared to formal education	64

I.16: Performance training of women found in biographical dictionaries, by birth decade	65
I.17: Formal education of female performers	67
I.18: Formal education compared to parents' educational backgrounds	75
I.19: Type of education by birth decade	76
II.1: Reasons women went on stage during the 19 th century	87
II.2: Reasons for entering show business, by birth decade	89
II.3: Women in "family business" category with sibling connections	89
II.4: Reasons for entering show business, minus "family business"	91
III.1: Divorce rates	151
III.2: Post-marriage career choices	154
A.1: Edwards v. Hooks—Comparison of data, all workers in entertainment field	270
A.2: Edwards v. Hooks—Comparison of data, women in the entertainment field	271

INTRODUCTION

In her article on Mrs. Sarah Siddons, the great English actress of the eighteenth century, Ellen Donkin suggests that female roles written by men “publicly reinforced a notion of Woman” in the abstract. “That notion of Woman,” says Donkin,

had a positioning effect on real women, on the way they lived their lives, on what men expected from them, and on what they expected from themselves. As she performed Woman, these cultural expectations of women *circled back* to the actress in performance through the demands of a very vocal audience. This circling back created a potential closure in the system that made change difficult to accomplish or even to conceive.¹

In the last third of the nineteenth-century, the tradition of the “very vocal [male] audience” that U.S. theatre had shared with England was being forcibly changed to one of greater passivity and politeness, not least because theatre managers wanted to attract middle-class women to the theatre.² Nevertheless, there were cultural expectations of “woman” that circled back to female performers through popular literature and the press, as well as through the plays they performed in. These ideas remained inarguably those of domestic ideology and redemptive womanhood.

This dissertation is an attempt to discover how these circling ideas of womanhood affected the rank and file of female performers working in New York City after the Civil War. It is a study of the socioeconomic background of female performers, how their images were publicly constructed by others, and how they presented themselves in comparison with their socioeconomic and cultural origins. It is also an examination of the changing expectations of

¹ Ellen Donkin, “Mrs. Siddons Looks Back in Anger: Feminist Historiography for Eighteenth-Century British Theatre,” in *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 278. Italics in original.

² For a discussion of the growing female audience, see Celia Braxton, “‘Home, Sweet Home’: *The Drunkard*, Domesticity and the New Theatrical Audience,” *New England Theatre Journal* 17 (2006): 15-34; For discussions of class and its impact on the theatre audience see Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow, The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Bruce A McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations, American Theatre & Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1992).

appropriate behavior for women and “ladies” as propounded by domestic ideology and the ideals of redemptive womanhood after the Civil War, and how these changes affected female performers.

The Centrality of Domestic Ideology for Women and Men in the Nineteenth Century

Domestic ideology is not the focus because of any initial assumption that the large majority of female performers were of middle-class backgrounds, an assumption upon which Benjamin McArthur bases his study, *Actors and American Culture*. In fact, this project was begun with the opposite assumption, following Tracy C. Davis’s conclusion about British actresses, that female performers of this period came from working- or lower-middle class backgrounds. Domesticity or redemptive womanhood is the touchstone for this dissertation because it was the dominant ideology guiding almost all women’s lives during the nineteenth century, both the way they thought and the way people thought of them. In addition, the values of domestic ideology, particularly the concepts of redemptive womanhood and sexual purity, are the values for womanhood that are promulgated in the plays most actresses appeared in, no matter whether they played at elite or popular priced theatres; in drama, musical theatre, or burlesque; were leading ladies or character actresses, stars or ballet girls. No matter what an actress’s background and personal experience may have been, she was constantly being told by the very texts she was memorizing and performing what the dominant values for womanhood were,³ and was required to embody, or for the sake of the plot, counter, those values in her behavior, speech and costuming. Women who played against this type and were popular because of it, such as Maggie Cline, Josephine Hall, or Marie Dressler, not to mention the women who

³ See, for instance, the discussion of *Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl* in Dorothy S. Pam, "Exploitation, Independence, and Solidarity: The Changing Role of American Working Women as Reflected in the Working Girl Melodrama, 1870-1910" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1980), 108-118, ProQuest, (AAT 8027918).

played in post-Thompsonian burlesque, knew exactly what they were doing. Cline, for instance, would often introduce her signature song, “T’row ‘Em Down, M’Closky,” by saying, “Now, ladies and gentlemen, I will sing the dainty and pathetic little ballad that drove me into this business;”⁴ and she once said that she “only met one man in her life who didn't like the song, and that was her father, who said, ‘Maggie, it ain't ladylike.’”⁵ Both these comments indicate that Cline understood exactly how contrary to the expected values of womanhood her onstage character was, and what she was playing against. Domestic ideology affected the careers of the rebellious as much as it did those who strove to stay within its bounds.

Domestic ideology has sometimes been called the “cult of domesticity” or even the “cult of True Womanhood.” But as Nina Baym and Gillian Brown have shown through literary criticism, and Nancy Cott and Nancy Hewitt have discussed historiographically, it was neither a cult nor a doctrine. Domestic ideology was, as I have said elsewhere, “a set of guidelines for developing a sense of self-worth and a set of personal values that would aid a woman living in a quickly- and ever-changing social and economic environment in which men had all the practical power.”⁶ Lacking an understanding of what domestic ideology meant to women and men of the nineteenth century, it is impossible to discuss how or why women attempted to build careers within it, rather than against it, without making assumptions of motive based on current ideologies and beliefs. In this introduction, I use analyses from literary criticism, as well as historical work, to better understand both how and why the domestic ideal developed and what it meant to both women and men.

⁴ “Maggie Cline, Vaudeville Idol of the 90s, Dies,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 June 1934, obituary in clippings portfolio, BRTC.

⁵ “Maggie Cline, Gallery Idol of ‘Good Old Days,’ is Dead,” *New York Evening Post*, 12 June 1934, clipping in portfolio, BRTC.

⁶ Braxton, 20.

In 1966, Barbara Welter published her seminal article, "The Cult of True Womanhood," in which she described the four "cardinal virtues" for nineteenth century female behavior she had identified through a thorough perusal of novels, short stories, diaries, and prescriptive literature of the period. According to Welter, nineteenth-century American women's behavior was circumscribed within a prescribed code that included piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity; and their actions were limited within "woman's sphere," notably the home, or the domestic "sphere."⁷ In addition to being religious, a True Woman, as Welter found her, was, if unmarried, both completely in control of her passions, and innocent of what they implied. This implies that after marriage, she maintained control of her passions in reference to any male other than her husband. The Truest Woman might love her husband more because he loved her and deserved her love, than out of passion. Because the ideal woman recognized her physical weakness and need for protection, as well as her lack of knowledge of the world of men (business, sexual, and homosocial), she deferred to her husband or father in all decisions outside the household. Once married, she provided a cheerful, morally uplifting, and well-run home, that was organized to provide comfort for her husband and growing male children, and training in domesticity for her daughters.⁸ And, Welter found, the woman's refinement and virtue was thought to aid men in resisting their inclinations for drinking, gambling, or whoring.⁹

The very limited range of behavioral options described above provides a useful shorthand for some aspects of domestic ideology, and I may refer to them in this manner throughout this dissertation, but if the ideology were that inflexible and unrewarding to women, women would not themselves have created it, upheld it, and fought within it and for it for over one hundred and

⁷ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 152.

⁸ Welter, 160-164. See also Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher, A Study in American Domesticity* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 87, 135, 153.

⁹ Welter, 156-157, 159.

fifty years. For historians such as Kathryn Kish Sklar, Nancy F. Cott and Lori Ginzberg have shown that the domestic ideal was not simply imposed upon women by patriarchal forces. Sklar recounts Catharine Beecher's highly influential development of domestic ideology in her *Treatise on Domestic Economy*, first published in 1841 and almost annually thereafter through 1856. In 1869, she co-published *The American Woman's Home* with her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, which according to Sklar, "contained little new besides Harriet's elaborate designs ... and Catharine's increasing support of a female-headed household." According to Sklar, Beecher felt the political process destructive of public and private morality. Only through the moral influence of women could the nation be saved. The home was to be "the base from which [women's] influence on the rest of the culture was launched," says Sklar, and women were to voluntarily subordinate themselves to their husbands for the greater good of the society.¹⁰ Their self-imposed subordination would provide a model of order within America's chaotic social situation, which in return would provide women with moral influence.

According to Cott, domestic ideology developed in reaction to the changing economic and social conditions of the United States, particularly the northeastern region, in the early- and mid-nineteenth century. As home production of textiles decreased, women lost their value as workers within a family economy. Girls who once had an economic place in the family before marriage now left for the mills or the cities. At the same time, professional and mercantile families were moving out of the business and manufacturing areas of cities into areas designated as residential. Married women of the developing middle classes found themselves both with less company from their sisters and older daughters, and without any work other than keeping house

¹⁰ Sklar, 151, 253, 135, 137, 158.

and child care.¹¹ As Gillian Brown explains in *Domestic Individualism*, “[a]s textile manufactures replaced household production . . . the memory of household production was retained in . . . the ideology of domesticity, which clothed the individual with a sense of enduring value in private life.”¹² The creation and maintenance of a sense of personal worth was one of the major functions of domestic ideology within the culture.

Cindy Sondik Aron and Scott Sandage suggest that the problem of personal worth was as great for men as for women. Most men of the developing middle class were or aspired to become small entrepreneurs or proprietors. But small businessmen went bankrupt on a regular basis in nineteenth century America. Clyde and Sally Griffen’s study of Poughkeepsie, New York, found that between thirty and sixty percent of small businesses failed before they were three years old. In fact, the rapidity with which self-employed men went into business, went bankrupt, and/or started new and often unrelated businesses, is startling.¹³ Aron suggests that:

many men were apparently having enormous difficulty succeeding at what had traditionally been middle-class work—independent proprietorships, professional careers, or upwardly mobile clerkships. . . .[S]et against the backdrop of frequent business failures and upheaval within the professions, their stories suggest a considerable zone of insecurity within the nineteenth-century middle class.¹⁴

¹¹ For a discussion of cause and effect of decreased home production see: Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 36-61; Thomas Dublin, *Transforming Women's Work, New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 74-118; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 25-29. According to Kessler-Harris, the market for home-produced textiles decreased to almost nothing between 1814 and 1830. See p. 26.

¹² Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism, Imagining Self in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 70.

¹³ Individuals listed in decennial censuses as "proprietor" for instance, might during the ten-year period have been the proprietor of businesses as different as merchant tailor and cigar store owner; or dentist, harness merchant, undertaker, and insurance agent. One man began as a farmer, proceeded to livery stable keeper, then owned a grocery store, and ended his recorded worklife as a farrier--and this was not particularly unusual according to the authors. Clyde Griffen and Sally Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers, The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 104, 109, 113.

¹⁴ Cindy Sondik Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service, Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 26 & 32.

Yet being a self-employed businessman or professional was almost the only definition of success acceptable to men of this class. According to Scott Sandage, in his study of five hundred “begging letters” to John D. Rockefeller at the end of the century, “to be a man was to transact, to contract, to make deals perpetually.” The “primary model of manly self-worth” was the “contracting free agent.” When a man’s business failed, his masculinity failed as well.¹⁵

Domestic ideology thus meets and attempts to ameliorate two problems: the problem of women stranded in their houses with no apparent role in the market economy; and the problem of men, required to make deals and keep business promises while subject to the commercial markets and the stresses and fluctuations of developing capitalism. According to Brown, “exponents of domesticity defined the home as a peaceful order in contrast to the disorder and fluctuations occasioned by competitive economic activity in the marketplace.” “In the midst of change,” she states, “the domestic sphere provided an always identifiable place and refuge for the individual: it signified the private domain of individuality apart from the marketplace.”¹⁶ In a quickly changing and industrializing urbanized marketplace, in other words, the ideal of domesticity was expected to secure individual worth for the individual.

In addition to ensuring a place in which to develop one’s personal values, domesticity empowered women within and beyond the home. Nina Baym suggests that the goal of domestic ideology was to theorize (and produce) a place of power for women within the culture—the middle-class home.¹⁷ According to Cott, the importance of women’s role as mothers early received support from ministers, as they acknowledged the reality that women now had the primary child-rearing responsibilities and thus influenced early formation of religious habits (and

¹⁵ Scott A. Sandage, “Gender and the Economics of the Sentimental Market in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Social Politics* 6, no. 2 (1999): 109.

¹⁶ Brown, 15 and 3.

¹⁷ Nina Baym, *Woman’s Fiction, A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870*, 2nd ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), xxvii.

therefore eventual church membership).¹⁸ Through motherhood, women influenced the moral development of the next generation of citizens and mothers. If childhood was the training ground for individual virtue, and the mothers were those in charge of child rearing, then in defense of the morality of their children and their home, women could take charge of societal virtue. Benevolent work such as moral reform, nursing, or feeding the hungry extended woman's sphere of motherhood to the entire society. By mid-century, Beecher, Emma Willard, and others had developed teaching as a career for women specifically based on the idea of women's ennobling influence.¹⁹ When women had to work, due to a husband's or father's death or business failure, work that extended the domestic sphere into the larger society was preferred. But as Kathleen McCarthy notes, the rhetoric of domestic ideology and benevolent work did not support moving beyond this type of endeavor.²⁰

Finally, women were thought to be more virtuous than men by nature. According to Lori Ginzberg, the fact that many more men than women were imprisoned was thought to "prove" this to be the case even within the lowest socioeconomic strata of society. The premium placed upon a woman's virtue by men and women both cannot be overstated. Since, as discussed above, men might go bankrupt at any moment, throwing even the wealthiest of women into poverty, some women "redefined social status as a measure of virtue," says Ginzberg. "Since the economic conditions that women found themselves in were due to men," and therefore were unstable, she suggests, the stability of a woman's "class" must be due to something else—their virtue. "If [women] identified with 'virtue,' all but the poorest could achieve what has come to

¹⁸ Cott, 76-98.

¹⁹ Sklar, 96-98, 136.

²⁰ Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture, American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 32.

be labeled ‘middle class respectability.’”²¹ The problem for many, however, became figuring out who was in fact virtuous, and who merely appeared so. After reading numerous reports of murderesses, along with such writers as Caroline Dall and Abbey Kelley, Barbara Cutter suggests that

motives [were] the key to women's character...Because one had to understand a woman's motives to determine whether she was proper, ... to judge a woman [one] would have to evaluate her sincerity. It was not enough to know, for example, that a woman worked as a prostitute; one also had to know whether she did so because it was the only way she could feed her family or because she was gratifying personal desires.²²

Throughout the century, the virtue of female performers, in terms of modesty of costume, marital behavior, type of material chosen, and, particularly for those coming in from outside the profession, motive, continued to be discussed, impugned, and defended, whether they were burlesque performers, chorus girls, or performers in the most respected theatres. Their avowed motives change throughout the period, as I shall discuss in Chapter Two, but motives remain a subject for discussion.

Because the dominant ideology placed such a premium on female virtue and the moral influence of women as mothers, wives and sisters, Cutter has suggested the term “redemptive womanhood” rather than domestic ideology, separate spheres, or the “cult” of domesticity or “true womanhood” as a construct that could include women from almost every segment of American nineteenth century society. Redemptive womanhood, Cutter states, echoing Beecher, required a woman to use her “special moral, religious, and nurturing nature to redeem others.”²³ Whatever a woman did, privately or publicly, if she did it to redeem others, she could be considered virtuous, no matter what her class or background. Late in the nineteenth century,

²¹ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence, Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 12, 24.

²² Barbara Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels, The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 5.

²³ Cutter, 7.

actress Georgia Cayvan would defend actresses by relating theatre to just this aspect of domestic ideology:

It is for us to take the tired men and women, to lift them out of the rush and struggle for a brief space, to help them forget the strife and ambition, the disappointment and sadness of their lives, in the world of the stage, where the glamour and romance bring restfulness, where ideal love and worthy deeds and noble sentiments are happily shown, and where griefs are only agreeably pathetic because they are not real agony, and everything comes out all right in the last act.²⁴

In other words, the mission of theatre is redemptive. The actress, like the nurse, the teacher, and the mother, is giving of herself to nurture society, rather than merely pursuing a career.

Although the idea of a shared and stable sense of virtue covered real differences, as Ginzberg notes, it also led to a sense of power as women. Thus, in a process of self-definition, according to Ginzberg, more and more women came to define themselves as middle-class. “This ideology about gender contributed to ... the notion that the United States itself was a middle-class society and that it was virtue, not wealth, that determined individuals’—and therefore the nation’s—success,” she states.²⁵ Such a broad definition of proper womanhood and middle-class status, along with the identification of middle-classness with the country as a whole, are undoubtedly facets of domestic ideology that made it so popular, even among those whom the country was not treating well.

But whether or not the majority of women, of European- or African-American ancestry, considered themselves middle-class or strove for it, Cutter notes “much evidence” that

nineteenth-century women of all classes and races shared a belief that women had a particularly religious, moral, and nurturing nature and that this special nature gave women an obligation to promote morality and religion and to selflessly nurture others, both inside and outside of their families.²⁶

²⁴ Georgia Cayvan, "The Stage and Its Women," in *World's Congress of Representative Women*, ed. May Wright Sewall (Chicago and New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1894), 179, <http://www.archive.org/details/worldscongressof00worluoft>.

²⁵ Ginzberg, 12, 16, 22-25.

²⁶ Cutter, 8.

This is supported by historians of working-class women. For instance, the rhetoric of the Martha Washingtons during the 1840s incorporated the ideal that, as Ruth M. Alexander says, “it was women’s duty to establish order and stability in the domestic setting.” Alexander finds that “Washingtonian emphasis on women’s maternal and moral responsibilities paralleled values and behaviors of the nineteenth century’s new middle class.”²⁷ Susan Levine states that “It seems likely that the language of home, family, and femininity had special meanings for working-class women, particularly those whose experiences were shaped by the labor and reform movements of the Gilded Age.” She notes a woman reader of the *Journal of United Labor* who wrote in to encourage attendance at assemblies of the Knights of Labor because it would “tone up the meetings,” while another encouraged women to join the union “to help protect the chastity of the home.”²⁸ Levine concludes that

[t]he lady Knights did not challenge the notion of a domestic sphere for women. Rather, like many nineteenth-century feminists, they believed in a particularly feminine sensibility, one that upheld the values of hearth and home and that could at the same time infuse the public world with a more moral, humane, and cooperative character.”²⁹

Given the striking similarities between this type of language and the language of “middle-class” domestic ideology, it makes sense to consider an overall concept of “redemptive womanhood” that might encourage most women to discuss their roles in a similar manner while making adjustments for economic and social class or political outlook.

Shirley Yee presents evidence that the domestic ideal was active within African-American circles as well. The opportunity to live up to domestic ideology represented freedom, as well as resistance to the stereotype of the promiscuous and physically powerful black woman,

²⁷ Ruth M. Alexander, “‘We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters’: Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850,” *Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (1988): 769, 775.

²⁸ Susan Levine, “Labor’s True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the Knights of Labor,” *Journal of American History* 70, no. 2 (1983): 323, 329.

²⁹ Levine, “Labor’s True Woman,” 337.

even though the work African-American women had to do to earn a living might require physical strength.³⁰ That the ideal of the chaste, domestic woman had power for post-Civil War African-American women is evident in the creation of the character of Virginia in novelist Pauline Hopkins' musical theatre piece, *Peculiar Sam*, written in 1879 when Hopkins was barely twenty. Threatened with a forced "marriage" to the black overseer, Jim, Virginia decides to run away, rather than "become what they wish me to be." After the war, her family reunites in Canada where Virginia, true to the ideals of purity and virtue, refuses even to discuss her love for Sam until she can be released from her "marriage" to Jim.³¹ Adopting definitions of femininity promulgated by and for white women could be interpreted as a hopeless attempt on the part of African-Americans to assimilate to white middle class values. But as Cutter points out, this point of view assumes that the free African-American community held no values of its own.³² Utilizing the idea of "redemptive womanhood" rather than focusing on the ideals of submissiveness and the unsullied domestic sphere enables historians to include African-American women as members of nineteenth-century womanhood, rather than consider them solely as a marginalized group. Certainly the mandate to "uplift the race" can be related to the concept of "redemptive womanhood" as Yee points out.³³

Although it is not perfect, and in fact seems to ignore cultural expectations of female chastity and piety, Cutter's "redemptive womanhood" suggests a way to discuss women's behavior during the nineteenth century that allows for differences in values and available choices

³⁰ Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists, A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 4, 41, 44-47, 54.

³¹ Pauline E. Hopkins, "*Peculiar Sam; or, the Underground Railroad*," facsimile of the manuscript in the Library of Congress," in *African American Theatre: Out of Bondage (1876) and Peculiar Sam; or, The Underground Railroad (1879)*, ed. Eileen Southern (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 124, 141-142. Fortunately, Jim immediately appears at the door to let her know that he does release her (and to remind her that "dat warnt no weddin', de law wouldn't 'low it nohow") and she is free to marry Sam.

³² Cutter, 16.

³³ Yee, 58.

that inhere to differing classes, ethnic and racial backgrounds, or political points of view. The idea of “redemptive womanhood” makes it possible to include women from these differing classes within the discussion without looking for separate reasons to justify behaviors that appear to mesh with an ideology that has often been ghettoized, if I may use that term, as solely that of the white middle class.

And if in fact a large proportion of women (probably the majority) shared a belief in, utilized, and lived by the tenets of this ideology (at least that of redemptive womanhood) as evidence seems to suggest, then it makes sense to look at performing women, a small segment of the female population of the period, as women who also shared that belief, utilized, and lived by this ideology, rather than rebelling against it.

The Importance of the Immediate Post-Civil War Period

The ethnic and professional co-cultures, not to mention the social and economic strata, in which a person lives as an adult may be very different, physically and mentally, from those in which a person grew up. Who we think we are, our expectations, and our requirements of life are often formed by the milieu in which we were brought up, rather than that in which we find ourselves as adults.

By 1880 when Sarah Bernhardt first toured the United States, the event Susan A. Glenn suggests was a catalyst in the presentation of female performers, perhaps the greatest change had already been made in the way women thought and behaved.³⁴ By 1880, having a job outside the home had become either a necessity or a choice for nearly 15% of American “women” over the

³⁴ Susan A. Glenn, *Female Spectacle, the Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 11-12.

age of ten.³⁵ For a small but growing percentage of these women, going on stage was the career of choice.

There have been four studies of nineteenth century performers and their family backgrounds previous to mine. Three of them examine British theatre, including Americans only when they appeared in London: Michael Baker's *The Rise of the Victorian Actor* (1978), Michael Sanderson's *From Irving to Olivier* (1984), which concentrates mostly on the first half of the twentieth century, and Tracy C. Davis's related studies on "The Theatrical Employees of Great Britain" (1990), and her 1991 book, *Actresses as Working Women*. Of these, only Davis's study has focused specifically on women. The only aggregate information we currently have on female performers of the late nineteenth century in the United States, other than one page in Janet Hooks' report, is folded into Benjamin McArthur's study of the 196 most well-known legitimate actors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Eighty-three of them, or 42%, were women. However, McArthur does not separate the women from the men in his study. In addition, his data comes almost entirely from biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias. He admits that as he says, "the stars' backgrounds may not have typified all professionals." But, he goes on to say, there is "no overriding reason to think that their social and geographic origins or levels of education should differ greatly from the average player."³⁶ Yet Tracy C. Davis, in an earlier study of theatrical employees in Victorian Britain, comes to the opposite conclusion. Her meticulous study of manuscript census data leads her to the conclusion that the backgrounds and living conditions of the leading actors were quite different from those of the "rank and file," at

³⁵ Janet M. Hooks, *Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades.*, vol. 218, Women's Bureau Bulletin (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 34. See Table 3.

³⁶ Benjamin McArthur, *Actors and American Culture, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984; reprint, University of Iowa Press, 2000), 30.

least in Great Britain, and that the backgrounds, living, and working conditions of women differed from those of rank and file men, not to mention the leading actors.³⁷

But while late nineteenth-century Britain and the post-Civil War United States share much, they were different cultures and offered different economic and social conditions and opportunities to women, including those who became actresses. In order to learn how similar to or different from British actresses American actresses of the late nineteenth century were, this dissertation explores the family backgrounds of women whose theatrical careers were based in the United States, even though they may have been born in England, Ireland, a continental European country, or elsewhere, and may have begun or possibly even completed their careers there. Thus, for instance, Mrs. John Wood, Fanny Januschek, Anna Held, and Kate Bateman are included. A major part, if not the bulk, of their theatrical careers were spent in the United States. Sarah Bernhardt and Adelaide Neilson are not included in the statistics that follow. They made tours of this country specifically to fill their coffers, and then returned from whence they came. My study concentrates on actresses active in New York City during the transitional decades of the 1870s and 1880s, but in order to confirm or deny McArthur's conclusions, I have searched out archival data for performers born during the 1870s, most of whom were active during the 1890s, 1900s, and well beyond.

Methodology of the Study

In attempting a survey of an historical population now dead and gone, it is impossible to approach a random sample. The data available is limited, constantly changing due to loss (or rarely, discovery), and inconsistent. The best one can do is to find as much information as

³⁷ Tracy C. Davis, "The Theatrical Employees of Victorian Britain: Demography of an Industry," *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 18, no. 1 & 2 (1990): 32.

possible about as many individual members of the entire population as possible. The greatest problem is to decide how the population is to be defined. I am mindful of the charges laid by Tracy C. Davis against Michael Baker and Michael Sanderson when she states that “in each case, only performers who were prominent enough to publish an autobiography or to be listed in the *Green Room Book* or the *Era Almanack* are considered.”³⁸ As she very rightly notes, this limits the population under study to the elite of the field. In order to avoid this limitation, I began by looking through George C.D. Odell’s massive compendium of theatrical seasons, *Annals of the New York Stage*. This compendium covers the New York theatre seasons in detail from pre-Revolutionary times through the 1893-94 season, in fifteen volumes published from 1927 through 1945. Odell recognized the special character of American theatre in his introduction:

It is impossible to proceed far in the journey ... without being forced to the conclusion that the theatre cannot be dissociated in treatment from other forms of amusement...and from negro [*sic*] minstrelsy and ‘variety’ were graduated many favourites of the ‘legitimate’ stage. In view of these shifting allegiances I have incorporated into the chronicle many affiliated, even many humble forms of diversion which the public from time to time paid of its savings to enjoy.”³⁹

Unlike biographical dictionaries of “notable” performers and stars, therefore, Odell’s *Annals* include the names of performers at all levels of theatrical endeavor, along with the names of the theatres they worked at, and the roles they played. His stated intention to “reconstruct a real theatre in a real city” in order to enable his readers to “see bygone performers and performances as in the eyes of bygone spectators they really were” (1:xii) led him to list all performers in New York for each theatrical season, until, in the late 1880s he was faced with such an exuberant growth in numbers of performers that he was clearly no longer able to do so. Odell’s listings, then, do not comprise only the stars, nor even only the well-known players, and are not confined

³⁸ Davis: 5; also see Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women, Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 14.

³⁹ George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, 15 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927; reprint, 1970), xi-xii. (Within this introduction, hereinafter cited in text by volume number and page.)

only to the higher class of theatres. Therefore, my methodology, which begins with Odell, casts a wider net than Baker's, Sanderson's or McArthur's studies do.

In order to obtain data for comparison with U.S. Census data, I chose to concentrate on the census years 1870, 1880 and 1890. As at present, during the nineteenth century each calendar year contained parts of two theatrical seasons. I began my research by making a list of all female performers mentioned by Odell for the two seasons of 1869-70 and 1870-71. After deduplication, this yielded the surprising total of 600 female performers, which represents 77% of the 780 female performers listed in the U.S. Census for 1870.⁴⁰ Only 16.5% of the 600, or ninety-nine women, worked in New York during both the 1869-70 and 1870-71 seasons.

The one season of 1879-80 yielded 832 unduplicated female performers in English-language theatre, plus another 74 in the larger German-language theatres and concert "gartens," for a total unduplicated female performing population of 906. Going by the results of the 1869-70-71 listings, a conservative estimate indicated that there would be at least another 928 names before deduplication from the 1880-81 season, plus three to four times that number for the two seasons of the final "decade," 1889-90-91. In the interests of time, I decided to limit my research for 1880 and 1890 to the season in which the year changed to the next decade (1879-80 and 1889-90). The final totals, including performers in Manhattan only, were as follows:

Table 1: Total unduplicated female performers found in Odell

<i>Seasons</i>	<i>#</i>
1869-70-71	600
1879-80	906
1889-90	1,117
TOTAL:	2,623

After making this list, I began looking up each woman in the catalogs of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Music, Dance and Theatre collections. For both the 1869-

⁴⁰ Hooks, 168.

70-71 seasons, and the 1879-80 seasons, every female name found in Odell was looked up, performers in concerts and circuses included, including women active in the German language theatre and concert halls. However, the 1,117 women gleaned from Odell's 1889-90 season listings came from English-speaking theatre alone.

A few words here about Odell's organization are now in order, and may illuminate the discussion of my findings. Throughout the first two volumes, Odell divides his chapters according to the theatres' producer/managers – the Hallams, Stephen Price, etc. Subheads within chapters select out special areas of interest, such as "Entertainments and Concerts" (2:371). In Book Seven of Volume Three, however, he begins a division of the theatres into what I have chosen to call his "first" and "second" chapters for each season. I have opted for this undescriptive description because his division is not consistent with the idea of "legitimate" versus popular forms of theatrical activity, nor with spoken vs. musical theatre, nor with what by the end of the nineteenth century Lawrence Levine has identified as the split between "highbrow" and "lowbrow," nor with what David Savran has identified as "middlebrow" theatre for theatre lovers with taste, nor even with expense or class, although there does seem to be some elitism involved in his selection, and he may originally have intended any or all of these divisions. The Park Theatre, which he often terms the "Old Drury" of New York in its time (4:1, 21, 188, 211) and all of Wallack's and Augustin Daly's theatres, for example, début and remain in the "first" chapters as one would expect. The Bowery Theatre, home of blood and thunder melodrama, changes from the "second" to the "first" chapter numerous times, and is put in the "first" chapter along with the Park Theatre and the Chatham through most of the 1840s (3:231, 298, 627, 675; 4:25). But the Astor Place Opera House, symbol in its own age and ours of the

aristocratic or bourgeois side of the growing class divisions in New York,⁴¹ makes its début in the “second” chapter, while the Broadway Theatre, where Edwin Forrest, hero of the Bowery B’hoys, played *Macbeth* on the night of the Astor Place Riots, debuts in the “first” chapter – and remains there until its demise in the fall of 1868 (8:449-50). The Academy of Music, “destined for over thirty years thereafter to be the home of opera in this city,” and the Metropolitan Opera House début in the “second” chapter and remain there (6:391; 12:289). Yet Niblo’s Garden, which is moved up to the “first” chapter in the 1860-61 season because manager Nixon had “cleansed his Augean stables and started a dramatic season so splendid that I needs must rank Niblo’s in the front line of theatres”(7:322), remains there through the 1870s, through *The Black Crook*, *Cinderella*, Lydia Thompson’s *British Blondes*, and the various Kiralfy extravaganzas that followed, moving to the “second” chapter only for the 1885-86 season, with no fanfare or comment except a note that in the 1884-85 season Niblo’s opened “with a spectacle of the kind associated with its later reputation, ... a ‘combination of drama, pantomime, opera and ballet’”(12:457). Of course, this could just as easily have described *The Black Crook* and *Cinderella* of nearly twenty years before! The Casino Theatre, known both for its comic operas and the revealing costumes of many of its stars—some of whom are described by the contemporary press as burlesque performers—début in the “first” chapter in 1882 and remains there to the end of the series. However, in addition to the Academy of Music and the Metropolitan Opera House, the “second” chapters include Tony Pastor’s and Koster & Bial’s vaudeville theatres, Harry Miner’s string of variety houses, the suburban Harlem theatres, and the popular-priced melodrama theatres around Manhattan. It is clear that Odell did not see the New York theatres in Bruce McConachie’s neat class divisions of paternal, yeoman/working class, and bourgeois or business class, nor did he make a division based entirely on genre, nor, as

⁴¹ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 63-69; McConachie, 145-50.

mentioned before, on a highbrow/lowbrow binary. Therefore, the designation of chapters as “first” and “second,” rather than “legitimate” and “other” or “upper” and “lower.”

The point of this discussion is that of the 1,117 English-language performers found in Odell’s first and second chapters for the 1889-90 seasons, only 423 women are listed in the “first” chapter and 688 in the “second” chapter, with 123 women found in both, an 11% duplication rate. Looking up this large number of women would have taken another full semester. Therefore, despite the wish to broaden the study population beyond the elite of the business,⁴² the decision was made to limit look-ups of women in the 1889-90 group to just those in the “first” chapter, so that preliminary research might be completed and the writing begun before another year on the project had passed. As the above discussion I hope makes clear, Odell’s first chapter does include a number of variety and vaudeville artists, in this as in every season he covers. While this study is not, therefore, quite as inclusive as originally intended, it has by no means been limited to the elite of the business—not even the top two tiers.

The final total of women from Odell whose biographical information was looked up was 1,929:

Table 2: Total records looked up

<u>Seasons</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1869-70-71	600
1879-80	906
1889-90	423
TOTAL	1,929

Out of this total, catalog records of some sort were found for 838 women (43%), including references to obituaries in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* and biographical sketches in the *New York Clipper*. Although the number of women active in the 1889-90 season in Odell’s “first” chapter was significantly smaller than those in his “second,” the “hit rate” for library listings was

⁴² Again, my thanks to Dr. Milhous for her suggestions on this.

extremely good. Catalog listings as described above were found for 70.22% of the women in the 1889-90 “first” chapter listing, but for only 35.92% of the previous two seasons combined. Out of the 838 records, 96 listed just a photograph available. There were a total of 26 women for whom only a *Mirror* obituary was available. This left 716 sets of clippings files and scrapbooks to look through, representing 37% of the original list from Odell. Some might argue that the fact that clippings files exist for these women at all indicates that they were the most “eminent,” to use Davis’s word, and of course, any performer who gets a notice, a biographical write-up, or an obituary in the press, theatrical or otherwise, may be defined as “eminent”⁴³ – certainly eminent enough to have received the attention of the press as compared to those who as yet have not or never did. But in the absence of large numbers of informative letters and diaries (and that absence exists), clippings files represent the bulk of the historical record, augmented but not replaced by reference to government documents such as marriage records, passport applications, raw census data and the like.

Of course, this historical record is by no means complete, even where it exists. Not all files provided complete biographical information—or even *any* biographical information. Sometimes, there was only a picture in what has been termed a clipping file; sometimes there was just a three-by-five card with the name of a show on it; sometimes the clipping file was “not on shelf.” Much of the time, the file did not provide information for every data item required by the study. There might be information on an actress’s country of birth, but no information on her parents’ place of birth, and none on her parents’ jobs. Often there was information on husbands and siblings, and/or the woman’s acting training, but nothing on her birthplace or her parents. Therefore, each statistic discussed in this dissertation is based on a different universe of subjects, which will always be stated.

⁴³ Davis, *Actresses/Working Women*, 14.

In addition, the database includes information on 101 women who have entries in biographical dictionaries such as *Notable Women in the American Theatre*, Grove Music Online, and *Encyclopedia of Black Women in America, Theatre, Arts and Entertainment*. A few of these women were also listed in Odell, so where biographical information of this type was available, I have used that rather than information found in clippings files or scrapbooks. Where sisters or mothers of women listed in Odell were discovered during this research, they have been added to the database, even when they fall outside the parameters of this study (i.e., active on the New York stage between September 1869 and 1898, since family background was a major field of analysis. In addition, during both catalog research and research in the *Mirror*, I often came across women who were clearly of some interest during the period, many of whom appear in Odell in other seasons (or even in the “second” chapter of the 1889-90 group). Where background information of the sort necessary for the study was obtainable, these women were added to the database—women such as Lillian Olcott, a Brooklyn doctor’s daughter, one of the amateurs who attempted to buy her way in at the top by forming her own starring company;⁴⁴ Lottie Gilson, the “Little Magnet” of the 1880s and 90s, who was hauled into night court in 1907 on a “drunk and disorderly” charge and died five years later, still under the influence;⁴⁵ or Louise Montague, the \$10,000 beauty of Forepaugh’s circus who sued her lover for a house he hadn’t bought her.⁴⁶ Finally, I often found women whose stories were simply interesting. Who could resist the story of Lizzie McCaull, who married “out of the profession,” killed her husband and was exonerated,

⁴⁴ "Lilian Olcott's Second Venture," *New York Dramatic Mirror* (hereinafter *NYDM*), 20 December 1884, 3; "Lilian Olcott," *NYDM*, 14 April 1888, 6.

⁴⁵ "'Little Magnet' a Police Court Star," *New York American*, 18 January 1907, clipping in BRTC clippings file; "Lottie Gilson, Impoverished 'Little Magnet,' Dies Very Suddenly in New York," *The Player*, 14 June 1912, clipping in BRTC clippings file.

⁴⁶ "Louise Montague, Made Famous by Adam Forepaugh, Asks Damages," 25 October 1902, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC; William E. Sage, "The Passing of the \$10,000 Beauty," *Cleveland Leader*, 1910, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC.

and then attempted to get back into the business?⁴⁷ Stories of this sort, and those much more mundane, were copied into a separate database of news squibs and stories for use as background and enrichment. There remain sources, such as the *National Police Gazette* and even the *New York Clipper*, which I have not had the time to delve into, and no researcher would be foolish enough to claim absolute completeness regarding any study of a human population. But this study of the backgrounds of nineteenth-century theatrical women in the United States is the most complete so far of any similar study, in Great Britain or the United States.

The final database consists of 762 female performers, 98.5% of whom were active between 1869 and 1898, or who were born during the decade of the 1880s.⁴⁸ Of these, 486 were listed in Odell for one of the seasons under study, and 277 came from the process described just above. Of those for whom year of birth was available, most were born from 1840 through 1879, but there are a number who fall outside that range. The number of those born in the decade of the 1880s is extremely small in comparison to the number of women in show business by 1900, and nearly half of the women in my database born during that decade have come from biographical dictionary entries. Statistics regarding this birth decade must be viewed with some suspicion, therefore, as they are likely to be skewed in favor of the top tier of performers. No birth year information has yet been found for 24% of women in the database.

⁴⁷ "Lizzie McCaull in Trouble," *NYDM*, 4 March 1882, 7; "McCall," *NYDM*, 7 July 1883, 6.

⁴⁸ The 1.5% not active after 1869 include such women as Adah Isaacs Menken (d. 1868); Cordelia Howard, who retired at the age of thirteen in 1862; Frances Ann Drake (b.1797), actress-mother of Julia Drake (b.1824); Anna Cora Mowatt (d. 1870), who retired in 1857; and Mary Taylor, the original "Lize, the Bowery G'hal" who retired to Albany some time before the Civil War, and died in 1866. With the exception of Mrs. Drake, all were members of the age cohorts covered by this study. The 4.5% of the database born during the 1880s also have their place in the analysis below.

Table 3: Percent of Actresses in database born per decade

<i>Birth Decade</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
1790s	1	0.1%
1800s	1	0.1%
1810s	19	2.5%
1820s	30	3.9%
1830s	46	6.0%
1840s	94	12.3%
1850s	119	15.6%
1860s	142	18.6%
1870s	93	12.2%
1880s	34	4.5%
1890s	1	0.1%
No birth year	182	23.9%
Totals:	762	100%

Chapter One provides the groundwork for the rest of the dissertation as it examines the ethnic and class backgrounds of U.S. actresses, along with their education. I briefly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Tracy C. Davis's methodology, significantly different from mine, and then compare the results of well-known theatrical population studies by Michael Baker and Michael Sanderson with analysis of my own database, concentrating on parents' occupations and what it may say about class background. In addition, I look at the performance training and formal education of female performers, considering again what this may tell us about their class backgrounds, as well as their level of education in comparison to other women of their generation.

Chapter Two examines the changing reasons women from non-theatrical families said or intimated that they went on the stage, and suggests two developments in theatre culture that might have made a theatrical career more socially acceptable for women as the century progressed. The first is the virtual elimination of prostitution as a recognized business venture inside the theatre buildings, although actresses still found it necessary to defend their reputations as virtuous women in the press and occasionally on the speaker's platform. The second is the change in family background within the population of theatre entrants due to the financial

exigencies of the Civil War and the Panic of 1873. The end of the chapter considers how the change in family background of entrants to the field affected the public stories of women from theatrical families.

Chapter Three questions the myth of theatre as an arena in which women were treated and paid on equal terms with men. The expectation of managers such as Augustin Daly and Daniel Frohman that actresses remain submissive or obedient towards theatre managers is contextualized as part of broader cultural expectations and practices and the threat to their business operations represented by the independent female star perceived by theatre managers of the 1870s and '80s is discussed. This is related to an increasing concern with divorce rates in the United States, and a concomitant increase in press coverage about divorce among female performers.

Chapter Four looks at the careers of two women in the latter part of the nineteenth century, both of whom used redemptive womanhood as well as other aspects of domestic ideology to build successful careers. Georgia Cayvan became the leading lady of Daniel Frohman's Lyceum Theatre in the 1880s and early 1890s by honing her public image and private life to a strict domestic ideal. Her image provided her with a virtual pulpit from which to speak on issues that concerned her regarding women and theatre. "Aunt" Louisa Eldridge built her career as a character actress by creating a public character that combined certain aspects of domestic ideology with newer ideas of womanhood developed after the Civil War.

Chapter Five considers the career of Fanny Davenport, child of a theatrical family, who after a lengthy residence in Augustin Daly's company, became one of the biggest independent producers of her time, male or female, and except for that extraordinary fact, lived her life well within the behavioral limits required by domestic ideology.

CHAPTER I

WHERE THE FEMALE PERFORMERS CAME FROM

In August of 1886, young Daisy Murdoch died of consumption. She was a “pretty and *piquante*...burlesquer [who] inspired admiration among the vacuous ranks of dudedom,” according to her obituary in the New York *Dramatic Mirror*. A week previously, the *Mirror* had sent a reporter to her rooms to check on whether the rumors of her impending death were true, and found they were: “Upon the white coverlet could be traced the wee, shrunken form of the erstwhile footlight favorite, while on the pillow straggled the golden curls in reckless profusion....A fit of coughing choked her utterance.”⁴⁹ The image is reminiscent of Little Eva in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, or perhaps even Marguerite Gautier in *Camille*. Apparently, the *Mirror* insinuates, she had made the best of a poor beginning. Daisy’s father was “related to the Murdoch who died in the Brooklyn theatre fire,” as well as to the Murdoch who wrote *Davy Crockett*, according to this report. He died when she was a child, and her mother remarried. The stepfather was “unreliable.” Probably as a result, Daisy became a member of a children’s *Pinafore* company. After that, she “drifted into burlesque,” a turn of phrase that manages to identify burlesque with prostitution. But, the obituary continues, “to the everlasting credit of the sweet and good young girl, let it be said that she turned a deaf ear to all temptations, pursued the even tenor of her way resolutely and passed unscathed along the fiery path where many a woman less gifted with common sense and determination has met disaster and destruction.”⁵⁰ Her story has been sentimentalized and constructed to fit the requirements of the domestic ideal. Although she went into theatre to support herself, rather than for redemptive reasons, she remained pure

⁴⁹ "Daisy Murdoch's Condition," *NYDM*, 7 August 1886, 2.

⁵⁰ "Daisy Murdoch," *NYDM*, 14 August 1886, 7.

and virtuous. Somehow her death from consumption redeems her career in burlesque. That is all we learn about Daisy from her *Mirror* obituary.

The obituary in the *New York Clipper* provides a few hard facts. She began her career at the age of five, singing in concerts near her home in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and joined Haverly's Juvenile Pinafore company when she was twelve. Within a year, the company went out on a thirteen-month tour without a break. She continued playing in various children's companies until, at the age of sixteen, she became of interest to E.E. Rice, a producer of extremely popular burlesques often developed around cultural icons, such as *Evangeline*. In this case, the icon was the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice. While the company was in San Francisco, Murdoch took over the role of Cupid at very short notice, and made such a hit that she continued in the part. In the year before she died, she had begun working with Nat C. Goodwin. She had left his company because of the consumption. "Murdoch" was a stage name.⁵¹ According to this obituary, Daisy Murdoch was a hard-working, talented performer who was on the rise. She was not a star. She was not a feminist. She is perhaps representative of the thousands of other girls and young women who went on stage during decade after the Civil War. Perhaps. Perhaps not.

Maybe Daisy Murdoch's background was unusual. Maybe, as Albert Auster characterizes young actresses of this period, most young women on stage were rebels—stage-struck middle-class young women kicking over the traces, or "lured by newspaper and magazine articles talking of the high salaries and independence enjoyed by actresses." Maybe many were poverty-stricken girls or newly-arrived immigrants looking for a way out of crowded and dirty tenements.⁵² Surely they were victims of a system that "took them in regularly when youthful and spat them out permanently when mature," as Tracy C. Davis has characterized young

⁵¹ "Daisy Murdoch," *New York Clipper* (hereinafter *Clipper*), 14 August 1886, 345.

⁵² Albert Auster, *Actresses and Suffragists: Women in the American Theater, 1890-1920* (New York and Philadelphia: Praeger, 1984), 50, 51.

performers in Great Britain.⁵³ Or maybe they were mostly girls from theatrical families, following a family trade.

This chapter seeks to find out who the female performers of the last third of the nineteenth century were: how unusual their work outside the home was; what types of families they came from; when they started their careers; and what type of training and education they had. This will lay the groundwork for the rest of the dissertation. The first section looks at the place of actresses as working women in the United States.

American Women at Work

In spite of domestic ideology and its tensions with the idea of performing—or working—women, during the decades immediately after the Civil War the growth rate of women in show business far outstripped the growth rate of women entering the work force generally (table I.1). According to Janet Hooks' *Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades, 1870 to 1940*, compiled census data for 1870 reports only 780 women in the entire country whose occupations were listed as being within the entertainment industry—16.7% of all people working in the entertainment field, and a miniscule 0.04% of all working women. By 1880, while the total

Table I.1: Women in entertainment as a percentage of all working women (age 10+)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total workers</u>	<u>Total working women</u>	<u>Working women: % of total workers</u>	<u>Working women: % of total U.S. women</u>	<u>Women in show business</u>	<u>Women in show business: % of working women</u>
1870	12,924,951	1,917,446	14.8%	9.7%	780	0.04%
1880	17,392,099	2,647,157	15.2%	10.7%	2,027	0.08%
1890	23,318,183	4,005,532	17.2%	13.1%	4,652	0.12%
1900	29,073,233	5,319,397	18.3%	14.3%	7,093	0.13%
1910	37,370,794	7,444,787	19.9%	16.7%	15,438	0.21%
1920	42,433,535	8,636,512	20.4%	16.7%	19,904	0.23%

Source: Data from Janet M. Hooks, *Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades*, Women's Bureau Bulletin vol. 218, (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1947), 34 and 168.

⁵³ Davis, *Actresses/Working Women*, 49.

number of people working in entertainment had barely more than doubled, the absolute number of women tallied in the entertainment industry had almost tripled, to 2,027. In that year, women represented 22.4% of all people tallied as involved in entertainment,⁵⁴ the highest proportion that women in the field would reach in the next sixty years (table I.2). Within the next decade, this growth rate slowed again. Although the absolute number of women in entertainment grew by 129%, according to compiled statistics, the total number of all workers involved in entertainment

Table I.2: Women as a percent of the entertainment field

Year	%		Total workers in entertain- ment field	Women as a % of entertain- ment field
	Women in entertain- ment	increase over previous decade		
1870	780	---	4,666	16.7%
1880	2,027	159.9%	9,049	22.4%
1890	4,652	129.5%	31,508	14.8%
1900	7,093	52.5%	42,746	16.6%
1910	15,438	117.7%	84,115	18.4%
1920	19,904	28.9%	105,567	18.9%
1930	29,164	46.5%	156,795	18.6%
1940	28,346	-2.8%	163,651	16.9%

Source: Data from Hooks, 34, 168, 224.

increased by 348%. The 4,652 women tallied as part of the entertainment field in the 1890 census report represented just 14.8% of the 31,508 people involved in the field.⁵⁵

Compiled census statistics provide the only information we have on the labor market in the nineteenth century, male or female, so a portion of this chapter will compare results of my survey of actresses with statistics compiled by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. But there are problems with the published census data, both with the way in which information was obtained during the enumeration process, particularly information concerning women, and with what information was reported and how. With each census, different questions were asked, both of the

⁵⁴ These are significantly different from statistics on actresses that have been published by Auster (31) and re-published by Glenn (13). In what appears to be a case of scribal error, Auster used the 1890 census total of women in show business for 1880, and the 1890 total for 1900. Susan Glenn has reprinted his error. For a full discussion of these discrepancies, as well as differences with Benjamin McArthur's figures, please see Addendum I.

⁵⁵ Hooks, 34, 168, 224.

American populace and of the data itself, once gathered, depending on what those in government felt were subjects of greatest economic and political importance at the time. This has caused problems in comparability of data, which are detailed in Appendix I. Compiled census data, particularly on women, cannot be accepted at face value.

Data on women's occupations was first collected in 1860, but this data is available only in raw form. A random sampling of raw census data sheets reveals that very few female occupations were in fact recorded. This is due less to lack of female participation in the labor market than to gender bias. According to Marjorie Abel and Nancy Folbre, "conventional census definitions...understate women's labor-force participation relative to that of men's in all years, especially those in which family enterprises accounted for a large share of employment."⁵⁶ In other words, since working out of the house in specific occupational positions has been what was defined and tallied as an "occupation," women whose labor within the home contributed to a family economy within the market economy—the "butter and egg" money of the farmer's wife, the piece work of women in the straw hat, shoe, and textile industries—were vastly undercounted. In addition, however, the bias of domestic ideology worked against women's occupations being tallied correctly even when they did work outside of the home. As Abel and Folbre state, "the concept of occupation is linked to social identity rather than to economic activity. For instance, a man might describe himself as having an occupation even if he is unemployed, retired, or working only intermittently." This is certainly true of performers whose employment, then as now, might be extremely intermittent, particularly during the summer months, when the census was taken. Abel and Folbre continue:

The potential disjuncture between gainful occupation and labor-force participation is even greater for women. If their primary social identity is housewife and they

⁵⁶ Marjorie Abel and Nancy Folbre, "A Methodology for Revising Estimates," *Historical Methods* 23, no. 4, 1990, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

are allowed only one choice of occupation, they are likely to describe themselves as "keeping house" regardless of their participation in market labor.... Further, traditional patriarchal norms attached considerable stigma to married women who relinquished their primary identity as housewife.... The social identity of "housewife" (or potential housewife) often preempted a work description for women who were engaged in considerable market production.⁵⁷

A woman asked what her occupation was, therefore, might answer "keeping house" or "housewife" even if she held a job or spent most of her time at home doing work for hire, because it was more socially acceptable to give that answer. And if she was not employed at the time the census taker arrived, she would be much more likely to give such an answer, rather than answer with the occupation she followed when she was employed. Men, on the other hand, would often answer with their occupation even if they were not fully employed. In addition to the social identity aspect, there is the likelihood that in spite of instructions to enumerators, in the case of women the question might simply not be asked, the answer "keeping house" simply assumed. The lack of recognition of female work was a major reason why the Association for the Advancement of Women petitioned Congress to include women as census enumerators for the 1880 census.⁵⁸

My research indicates that at the very least, the 1870 census vastly undercounted actresses. One of the great stars of the day, Maggie Mitchell, with a large house on Fifth Avenue, is listed under her married name as "keeping house." Her brother's occupation is listed as "theatre manager," and her husband, Henry Paddock's, as "gold broker." Her father's occupation is listed as "bookbinding." At age 65, on Fifth Avenue, with a daughter who by the same census account owned real estate worth \$100,000, it is not likely that he was binding books as anything more than a hobby. Yet his occupation is listed as "bookbinding" rather than "retired" or no

⁵⁷ Abel and Folbre, paras. 6-12.

⁵⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate Misc. Doc. 45th Congress, 2d Session, No. 84. Serial No. 1786, vol. 2, quoted in Hooks, 53-54.

occupation at all, while Maggie Mitchell is “keeping house.” “Aunt” Louisa Eldridge, already a well-known character actress within the profession (about whom more later) is listed as “keeping house” in the flat on Fourth Avenue and Thirteenth street in which she lived for nearly thirty years. (She is listed that way in the 1880 census, as well.) Actress Emma Waller, whose husband David is listed as “stage manager,” is also “keeping house” in 1870, and it is probable, given the area in which they are living and his Rhode Island birthplace, that Charles and Fanny Smith, no occupation listed for either, are actually Charles Smith and wife Fanny Morant, a leading actress at Daly’s Fifth Avenue Theatre.⁵⁹

But a mis-tally of three, possibly four, actresses is not the major reason for this statement. There are six hundred individual women listed in George C.D. Odell’s *Annals of the New York Stage* for the 1869-70-71 New York City seasons. At that time there were at least fifty stock companies operating in the United States, almost all of them outside of New York.⁶⁰ It is hardly likely that in the whole of the rest of the United States during 1869-70 and 1870-71, territories included, there were only 180 female performers who never got to New York City.⁶¹ The 1870 census undoubtedly undercounted female performers. In addition to actual growth in numbers, therefore, the increase of 159% in the number of female performers in the census from 1870 to 1880 may partly reflect an increased recognition on the part of enumerators, at least those in major metropolitan areas, that women might be doing more than “keeping house.” It may also

⁵⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 1870 Census, New York State, New York County, 18th ward, 4th enumeration district, 20.

⁶⁰ Alfred L. Bernheim, *The Business of the Theatre* (New York: Actors' Equity Association, 1932), 30.

⁶¹ Bernheim (30) quotes issues of the *NYDM* from 1875 through 1879. Clara Morris stipulates the following women's “lines of business” in the late 1860s: leading lady, first old woman, first singing soubrette, walking ladies, second soubrette (who also played boys' parts) utility woman, and the ladies of the ballet. Assuming just two walking ladies and a paltry three “ladies of the ballet,” a company would have had at least ten women. This indicates a bare minimum of 390 female performers outside New York. See Clara Morris, *Life on the Stage, My Personal Experiences and Recollections* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co, 1901), 40.

reflect an increased acceptance of acting as a vocation for women, and an increased pride in the profession.

The rest of this chapter lays the statistical groundwork for the discussions in Chapters Two and Three of how these women presented themselves, in contrast or concert with their backgrounds, their education, and the post-Civil War push towards professionalism and middle-class respectability within the profession.

Ethnic Background of Female Performers in New York City

Even before the advent of the combination system, which sent hundreds, if not thousands of performers on tour for months year after year, female performers in New York were a highly mobile population. The turnover between the 1869-70 season and the 1870-71 season, when most performers, male or female, still worked in stock companies,⁶² illustrates the high mobility within the theatrical profession from season to season. Of 600 female performers listed in George C.D. Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* for the two seasons including the 1870 census, only 99, or 16.5%, were listed for both seasons. This mobility only increased as the century progressed and more and more companies went on the road. Only nineteen of the total of 2,623 women in the Odell lists were active in New York in all periods, while 126 women were active in two of the three periods (table I.3).

Table I.3: Women in Odell in more than one decade

<i>Seasons</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
1870 & 1880	35	24%
1870 & 1890	18	12%
1880 & 1890	74	51%
All 3 seasons	19	13%
Totals	146	100%

Source: Odell, vols. 8:559-645, 9:1-99, 11:1-148, 14:216-383

⁶² Bernheim, 30.

But whether a performer was present in New York during consecutive census years does not indicate the success of a woman's career. Marie Bates, who appears in the Odell listings only during the 1870-71 season, originated the role of Aunt Rosa in David Belasco's *Zaza* on Broadway in 1899 and was featured again in Belasco's *The Return of Peter Grimm* in 1901. Most of her career between June, 1871 and the opening of *Zaza* in 1899 was spent outside New York. Lucy Adams appeared at New York's Bowery Theatre in 1869-70. She and her sister then "appeared on stages from Providence to San Francisco over a period of forty-five years as the 'Lilliputian Ladies,'" according to her obituary, never again hitting New York, at least not during a census season.⁶³ Ottilie Genee spent twenty years in San Francisco as manager of that city's German Theatre, according to her 1911 obituary. But as "an important [figure] in the development of German drama in America,"⁶⁴ she was seen in New York at least twice—in German-language theatres—during the 1869-70 and the 1879-80 seasons, although her home base remained California. Having performed in New York City during one or more of the seasons chosen for this study is not a criterion for judging the rank or success of a performer.

Ottilie Genee notwithstanding, most American actors were of British descent. The first American actors were British by birth, and well into the nineteenth century, American theatre managers customarily took a yearly trip to England to find and negotiate with talent for their companies. Thomas Barry brought Clara Biddles, Mrs. John Wood, and her husband to the Boston Theatre in 1854 after one of these trips. (Miss Biddles soon became known as Mrs. Thomas Barry).⁶⁵ James W. Wallack made thirty-four transatlantic trips with this purpose

⁶³ "Marie Bates," 16 May 1896, clipping from *NYDM* in Marie Bates clippings file, BRTC; "Miss Lucy P. Adams," 29 December 1954, obituary from *New York Times* (hereinafter *NYT*) in Lucy Adams clippings file, BRTC.

⁶⁴ "Famous German Actress Is Dead," *Indianapolis Star*, 26 November, 1911, 52, NewspaperArchive.com.

⁶⁵ Jane T. Peterson, "Wood, Mrs. John" in *Notable Women in the American Theatre: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Alice M. Robinson, Vera Mowry Roberts, and Milly S. Barranger (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989), 925. "Mrs. Thomas Barry," 25 August, 1878, clipping from *Boston Herald* in "Personalities" clipping file, Harvard Theatre Collection (hereinafter HTC).

primarily in mind. From one of these, he returned with Laura Keene.⁶⁶ Lydia Thompson's British Blondes, who were with rare exceptions actually British, included Eliza Weathersby and Rose Coghlan, both destined to become "legitimate" stars in America.⁶⁷ As late as 1884, Sophie Eyre was brought to New York by Lester Wallack to be leading lady for the Wallack company, and in 1886, Lydia Thompson's managers were said to want her to bring over an entirely new British company.⁶⁸ Yet compiled U.S. Census statistics indicate that by 1870, most actors in the United States, male and female, were U.S.-born, as shown in table I.4⁶⁹:

Table I.4: Birth Country of Persons Employed in Show Business,* 1880 v. 1870

<u>Country of birth</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>%</u>
United States	5,574	75%	2,167	70%
Ireland	249	3%	141	5%
Germany	354	5%	244	8%
Great Britain	592	8%	330	11%
Scandinavia	20	0%	3	0%
British America	181	2%	55	2%
Other countries**	446	6%	154	5%
Total	7,416	100%	3,094	100%

*Includes those designated as "actors" and as "showmen and employes of above" (1880) or "showmen and showwomen" (1870).

**In 1870, this includes 57 from France and 97 from China and Japan. In 1880 it is not broken out.

Sixty-six percent of the female performers in my database were U.S.-born, well under the U.S. census figures. But how many of those who were born in the U.S. were the children of immigrants—and immigrants from where? This information is considerably more difficult to come by than information on the actresses themselves. Reviewers, for instance, often gave the

⁶⁶ Vera Mowry Roberts, "Keene, Laura," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger (1989), 490.

⁶⁷ "A Famous Burlesque Actress," unidentified clipping in Eliza Weathersby clipping file, BRTC; "Miss Eliza Weathersby," n.d. 1879, unidentified clipping in Eliza Weathersby clippings file, BRTC.

⁶⁸ "Sophie Eyre," *Clipper*, 13 February 1886, 756; "Lydia Thompson Not to Return," *NYDM*, 5 June 1886, 388.

⁶⁹ Francis A. Walker, ed., *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census*, Census Office U.S. Department of the Interior, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1883), http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1880a_v1-18.pdf. Table 32, 744-745. (Hereinafter 1880 Census Statistics.); Francis A. Walker, ed., *A Compendium of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870)*, Census Office U.S. Department of the Interior, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1872), <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1870e-01.pdf>. Table 45, 604-608. (Hereinafter 1870 Compendium.)

birth country of an actress, when not the United States, as part of their introductory material, but rarely discussed her parentage, unless she was of a fairly well-known theatrical family. Even then, the information they might give was usually incomplete. As the growth of the theatrical and celebrity press escalated, and interviewers began to probe, much more information was forthcoming from the actresses themselves. However, either to create a desired impression, or to protect their own privacy, by the end of the century, when theatrical interviews and biographies had become popular entertainment in their own right and the theatrical press recognizable as the piranhas they have now become, female performers might give out half-truths or occasionally, fiction. Bianca La Blanche (or her agent) inserted a puff in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in 1881 stating that she:

was not appreciated in this country—partly because she came here under Max Strakosch's management, but principally because her prospects were blasted by the troupe's fiasco. It is to be hoped that this excellent singer will visit us again in the near future under more auspicious circumstances.⁷⁰

It would appear from this that Miss LaBlanche was an opera singer from Europe—France perhaps?—who had been discovered and brought to these shores by impresario Strakosch. But Miss LaBlanche was actually the sister of the star Fanny Davenport and daughter of U.S.-born E.L. Davenport, once leading man of Wallack's Theatre, and before that, Anna Cora Mowatt's leading man. Blanche Davenport was born in the British Isles (her parents met, married, and spent the first five years of their marriage there),⁷¹ but she grew up very much in the northeastern U.S. theatrical milieu. The *Mirror* article, clearly a press release (it appears twice within two weeks), is deliberately misleading—and the *Mirror* itself was happy to cooperate in helping Miss Davenport create a new public persona.

⁷⁰ "Bianca Lablanche," *NYDM*, 23 April 1881, 6.

⁷¹.Susan S. Cole, "Davenport, Fanny Lily Gypsy," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 192-3.

An 1872 article in the *American Atheneum* states that Agnes Ethel, who had left Augustin Daly's Fifth Avenue Theatre company to star on her own, was born in Virginia and "early developed a predilection for the stage, which circumstances did not permit her to gratify until within the past few years." The vague Virginia birthplace coupled with the "circumstances" that did not allow her to follow her "predilection for the stage" is constructed to lead the reader to believe that she comes from Virginia aristocracy or close to it. In 1872, it was well within the range of possibilities that the events of the Civil War might have pushed a young Southern lady onto the stage. However, one obituary states that she was born in New York in 1852, another that she may have been a "poor sewing girl," and a card in the New York Public Library's Billy Rose Theatre Collection states that she was born in Ireland in 1845. An Emergency Passport Application from 1888 states that she was born in 1846, probably in New York, although the handwriting is a bit difficult to decipher.⁷² The Virginia background, published at the height of her career, is a purposeful fiction.

The result of this narrow focus and misinformation is that of the 615 women in the database for whom information is available on their own country of birth, there is information on father's birth country for 210 (34%) and mother's birth country for only 174 (28%) – not necessarily the same actresses. And for many of these, no information has been found on their own birthplace. For the total of 406 actresses born in the United States (66% of the entire database), information on parents' birth countries has been found for 148 of them, or just 36.5%. Thirty-four percent of the 148 are U.S.-born of two U.S.-born parents, and another 18% had one parent who was U.S.-born, for a total of 52% with at least one U.S.-born parent. This means that

⁷² "Sketches of Eminent Artistes. No. 2. Agnes Ethel," *American Athenaeum*, 28 September 1872, clipping in Robinson-Locke scrapbook, BRTC. "Death of Agnes Ethel Tracy," *NYDM*, 6 June 1903, clipping in Robinson-Locke scrapbook, BRTC. "Ethel," *NYDM*, 29 May 1886, 6. Catalog card, Agnes Ethel, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, BRTC; *Emergency Passport Application*, 1888, Ancestry.com, U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925 (694).

48% of the U.S.-born actresses in the database for whom there is parent birth information were first-generation Americans on one side of their family at least. Overall, 25% of these first-generation Americans were of British descent, including the Bateman family, 12% were of direct German ancestry on one side at least, and 10% had at least one parent from Ireland. Just under 5% had at least one from France and only 7% had parents from any other European country (table I.5). Any influx of non-Anglo-Saxon or middle-European immigrant performers that may have taken place did so after the 1890 theatrical season:

Table I.5: Parentage of U.S.-born Actresses

Total U.S.-born w/parent birth info: N=149

<u>Parents' Birth Country</u>	<u>Both</u>		<u>Father</u>		<u>Mother</u>	
	<u>Both</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>only</u> *	<u>%</u>	<u>only</u> #	<u>%</u>
USA	49	33%	27	18%	32	21%
British Isles	7	5%	16	11%	5	3%
German States	4	3%	8	5%	3	2%
Ireland	3	2%	5	3%	3	2%
France	0	0%	2	1%	3	2%
Other Euro.	0	0%	3	2%	3	2%
Central/South Amer.	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%
Totals:**	63	42%	62	42%	49	33%

*Includes those for whom only father's information is available.

#Includes those for whom only mother's information is available.

**Totals add up to more than 148 due to "mixed marriage" overlap.

Of 234 Odell actresses in the database for the 1889-90 season, there is information on mother's birth country for 51 of them, or 22%. Of this 22%, nearly half, or 45%, had U.S.-born mothers. This is nearly twice the proportion of U.S.-born mothers within the New York City population as a whole according to compiled census data for 1890.⁷³ It appears that generally, after the mid-point of the century, U.S. birth and U.S. parentage were a distinct advantage for those wishing to enter the theatrical professions.

⁷³ *Report on Vital and Social Statistics in The United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890*, ed. John S. Billings, M.D., vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1896), table 23, 544-545.

Family Economic/Professional Background

As noted in the Introduction, there have been four studies of nineteenth century performers and their family backgrounds previous to this one. Michael Baker's 1978 study includes information on family backgrounds of 215 performers who made their British stage debuts before 1890. Of these, 73, or 34% are women.⁷⁴ Baker divides his database into generations, or cohorts, by the date of their theatre debut: between 1800 and 1830; 1830 to 1860; and 1860 to 1890. He appears to have relied heavily on the *Theatrical Times* (1846-49), works on noted or celebrated players, and memoirs.⁷⁵ The birth years of his population are fairly coincident with the birth years of those in the database, although 17% of the women in my own database were born after 1868, the birth year of the youngest of the actresses Baker studies.

Michael Sanderson's 1984 study uses the late nineteenth century as a jump-off point for a study of the change in status and working conditions of twentieth century British performers. (The title of his first chapter, "Escaping the Victorian Legacy," indicates his attitude to the period under study here.) Out of his sample of 1,133 performers, 39% or 443 of them are women. His study includes performers who made their debuts before 1880 only if they were still professionally active after 1890, and he separates this cohort from those who debuted during the decade of the 1880s, again including only those who continued performing after 1890. A third cohort are those who debuted between 1890 and 1913.⁷⁶ All three of these cohorts overlap with the years of my study, both in terms of performance activity and birth year of subjects, although for much of the overlap, his database is limited to the most successful and most long-lived in

⁷⁴ Michael Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, Croom Helm Social History Series (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1978), 200-19.

⁷⁵ Baker, 200.

⁷⁶ Michael Sanderson, *From Irving to Olivier, A Social History of the Acting Profession in England 1880-1983* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 331, 333. He also studies those debuting between 1914 and 1945, and those beginning after 1945, but they are not relevant to this discussion.

terms of career. Two hundred and forty-one women within his database fall into one of these three categories, representing 37% of the female performers he studied. Tracy Davis states that Sanderson “drew only upon the portion of the profession eminent enough to appear in the *Green Room Book* or to be immortalized in published biographies and autobiographies.” Sanderson does not say how he chose the actors that make up his database, but he does say that his information on fathers’ occupations was culled from “obituaries, interviews, the theatrical press, memoirs etc.”⁷⁷ This does not mean that he relied solely on compendia of biographical information of the most noted players of the time. Based on the experience of researching this project, it appears to be reliance on what is available in the historical record. It is possible that for the period under study here, as opposed to the portion of his database active in the first half of the twentieth century, his choice of subjects and information on them does draw primarily on published biographical dictionary-type sources, as Davis claims; this cannot be determined from his bibliography. But this is not what he appears to claim in his “Notes on Appendix I,” quoted above. Because Sanderson’s method and his date range are similar to mine, and because his database includes the larger number of actresses, his findings provide a good point of comparison between women on the British and U.S. stages for this chapter.

Davis, doubting that the naturalized change of socioeconomic status of the leading players corresponded with the experience of the bulk of players, returned to the British manuscript census for 1861 and 1881 in search of “a sample of performers as true as possible to the social, economic, sexual and professional demography of the theatre.” She searched the census for performers living “beyond the West End of London” to obtain a sample “using geographical residence rather than fame as the criterion for inclusion” in her database. Her information on performers’ family backgrounds is limited to performers she considers to be

⁷⁷ Davis, *Actresses/Working Women*, 14; Sanderson, 331.

newest to the field—solely those between the ages of 20 and 24—and therefore, she feels, most likely to be living at home with their families. Indeed, she excludes any performers within that age group who are living alone.⁷⁸ Her figures are derived in a manner so different from Baker's, Sanderson's, McArthur's and those presented here that a full discussion must wait for a later study. It is questionable, however, whether her assumption that those young performers living with their families—who do turn out to be overwhelmingly working class—are necessarily the best representatives of those just starting out. They might have been living with their families for the very reason that they *were* working class and had no means other than their negligible salaries upon which to live, whereas those starting from possibly middle-class or theatrical families—who were no less entrants to the field, and no less professional—might have had the wherewithal to live in different circumstances, or might have come from homes outside of London entirely. Her results are certainly at variance with those of Sanderson and Baker, as well as with much of what this research project has found.

All of the studies just named are concerned entirely with British performers. Benjamin McArthur is the only historian who has collected information on American actors. As mentioned above, eighty-three of his subjects, or 42%, are women, but he does not separate the women from the men in his study. McArthur follows Baker's methodology in using published biographical dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other compendia on major players. All these studies attempt to discover the social and economic backgrounds of those entering the theatrical profession, but the profession is defined differently by each author. Baker and McArthur limit their study to "the legitimate," either purposely or due to the sources they use. Sanderson does include performers in the Music Halls. As explained above, by beginning with Odell's compendium, I have

⁷⁸ Davis, "Theatrical Employees," 6-7.

attempted to include as many variety and vaudeville performers as possible in this database, along with those specializing in musical theatre.

What follows will look first at the information gathered by researchers on the British theatre population, and afterwards consider McArthur's figures on the U.S. theatre population, which is presented in a somewhat different manner, making direct comparison with the British data difficult. Because of the differences in the way occupations are categorized by Sanderson, Baker, and McArthur, I have arranged my own "employments" table in three different ways to make the data as comparable as possible. Please see Appendix II for details of which occupations are included under which broad labels for the tables in the remainder of this chapter.

British and U.S. Actresses Compared

In the aggregate, the fathers' occupations of American actresses in my study bear a greater similarity to Sanderson's than to Baker's population (see table I.6 below).⁷⁹ Sanderson found that 41% of the actresses he tabulated had a father who was in a theatrical occupation and my own study indicates 45%. Baker's 61% incidence of actresses coming from families with theatrical fathers is therefore somewhat surprising. There are also major differences between Sanderson and Baker, with respect to the number of actresses coming into the business from professional and titled families (lawyers, doctors, high government officials, army officers, and gentry), and families from artistic and literary backgrounds. Sanderson shows a much higher incidence of actresses coming from these backgrounds than does Baker.

⁷⁹ All tables in which I make comparisons with Sanderson's data use his categories, with the adjustment of combining those of "landed or titled status" with the "professions." As there is no stable population of landed gentry in the United States, nor any aristocracy not related to wealth, I tended to use recency of wealth in determining whether to place some parents of actresses in my database in the Professional & Gentry category or in the Commercial/Industrial category. Any parent who did not have to work, no matter what his or her own father did, is included in the Professional & Gentry category within my own database. It is a purely subjective discrimination on my part. It is worth noting that within Sanderson's data, only two out of 241 women had fathers of Landed or Titled Status during the period under consideration in this study.

Table I.6: Occupations of Fathers of Female Performers, Great Britain vs. U.S.A.

	<i>Baker</i> <i>Debuts 1800-1890</i> <i>(N=74)</i>	<i>Sanderson</i> <i>Debuts pre-1880-</i> <i>1913 (N=241)</i>	<i>Braxton</i> <i>Born 1797-1890</i> <i>(N=344)</i>
Theatre	60%	41%	45%
Professional & Gentry	11%	37%	23%
Artistic/Literary	4%	12%	7%
Commercial/Industrial	11%	8%	15%
Clerical/ Lower	0%	1%	1%
Salesmen	0%	1%	1%
Artisan/ Manual	5%	1%	9%
No information	8%	na	na
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Source: Baker, 213-219; Sanderson, 331.

As all these figures are in the aggregate, the question arises as to whether there is some progression within Baker's database over the ninety year period he covers that would explain the differences. However, a breakout by his groupings shows this not to be the case:

Table I.7: Breakdown of Fathers' Professions in Baker's Database, by Debut Year

<i>Family Background</i>	<i>1860-90</i>		<i>1830-60</i>		<i>1800-30</i>		<i>Totals</i>	
	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
Theatre in some aspect	13	56.5%	21	63.6%	10	58.8%	44	60.3%
Professional & Gentry	2	8.7%	4	12.1%	2	11.8%	8	11.0%
Artistic/Literary	3	13.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	4.1%
Commercial/Industrial	2	8.7%	5	15.2%	1	5.9%	8	11.0%
Clerical/ Lower	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Salesmen	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Artisan/ Manual	1	4.3%	0	0.0%	3	17.6%	4	5.5%
No information	2	8.7%	3	9.1%	1	5.9%	6	8.2%
Totals:	23	100.0%	33	100.0%	17	100.0%	73	100.0%

Source: Baker, 213-19.

Baker's high level of theatrical fathers is fairly constant over all three periods and actually higher among those debuting in mid-century. The significant difference between his figures, Sanderson's, and mine with regard to father's occupation must be related to both his small sample size and his method. Within theatrical memoirs and the theatrical press, scions (and scionesses) of theatrical families may be more likely to attract attention, because of the renown of their forbearers and the possibility of the formation or continuation of a theatrical dynasty,

than those coming in from outside the profession. It is also possible that those who had theatrical fathers rose to the top of the profession faster or in greater number, and thus appeared in biographical compendia of their own period, which is the type of material Baker used as a source. They would have had a head start in experience, training, and contacts, which would enable them as a group to reach greater success. It appears that Davis is correct when she states that Baker's data is not reliable or representative of more than the very top echelon of theatrical performers in Britain during the nineteenth century.

While the proportion of theatrical fathers within my database and Sanderson's is approximately the same in the aggregate over the century, a chronological breakdown shows significant differences and fluctuations between British and American actresses' backgrounds. In

Table I.8: Chronological Comparison of Father's Occupations, British vs. U.S. Female Performers

<i>Occupational class</i>	Sanderson-by debut year* (N=241)			Braxton-by birth year (N=198)			
	<i>pre-1880</i>	<i>1880-89</i>	<i>1890-1913</i>				
	<i>Earliest/latest birth year</i>						
	<u>1856/1864</u>	<u>1860/1873</u>	<u>1870/1897</u>	<u>1850-59</u>	<u>1860-69</u>	<u>1870-79</u>	<u>1880-89</u>
Theatre	70.6%	37.2%	35.4%	43.5%	27.8%	22.5%	43.5%
Professional & Gentry	8.8%	35.1%	46.0%	25.8%	33.3%	37.5%	17.4%
Artistic/Literary	11.8%	16.0%	8.8%	4.8%	18.1%	7.5%	0.0%
Commercial/Industrial	5.9%	10.6%	7.1%	8.1%	12.5%	25.0%	17.4%
Clerical/ Lower Salesmen	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	3.2%	1.4%	0.0%	8.7%
Artisan/Manual	2.9%	1.1%	0.9%	14.5%	6.9%	7.5%	13.0%
Totals:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Source: Sanderson, Appendix I, 329.

addition, there are notable differences in father's occupations of women whose fathers had no theatrical connection. In table I.8 above, I have indicated an estimate of the possible earliest and latest birth years of Sanderson's population, in order to aid in forming a truer comparison between his population and mine. Most actresses during this period made their professional adult debut between the ages of 16 and 20, although 14 was not uncommon in the United States, and

of course, a few were older than 20. Thus Sanderson's pre-1880 *début* cohort would probably have been born around 1856 at the earliest, and no later than 1864, while the 1880-89 cohort would probably have been born in 1860 at the earliest, 1873 at the latest. His later cohort, *débuting* between 1890 and 1913, goes beyond the bounds of this study with regard to the latest likely birth year (1897) but overlaps well with my own birth-decade cohorts of 1870-79 and 1880-89.

The first finding of note is that although the proportion of theatrical fathers within my database and Sanderson's is similar in the aggregate (see table I.6), the largest proportion of Sanderson's population to have had fathers in theatre is found within the oldest cohort, those *débuting* before 1880. Seventy percent of these women had fathers in the theatre. Within the U.S. database under consideration here, approximately 44% of actresses in this cohort had theatrical fathers. U.S. actresses born in the two following decades have a significantly lower percentage of fathers in the business. The high percentage of theatrical fathers in Sanderson's oldest cohort may be due in part to his selection process. He only included such performers in his database if they were still performing after 1890.⁸⁰ It is quite possible that those coming from a theatrical tradition would last longer in the field, both because of their wider experience and possibly greater success, as suggested above, and because the theatre was more truly "home" to them than to women who had come from outside the profession; it was the only life they knew. Women who entered from outside the profession might find the professional life more difficult to sustain, less important to their sense of who they were, or even counter to their deepest sense of self, and therefore easier to leave as they aged and/or married.

The two-decade "slump" in women with theatrical fathers within the U.S. database, and the increase in those with professional or wealthy fathers, coincides with immense financial and

⁸⁰ Sanderson, 331.

social changes in the United States. Women born during and immediately after the Civil War were often born into families that had suffered financial hardships because of the war, or had lost their male breadwinners. And beginning in 1873, the United States suffered a “Panic” or depression, which rolled across the country over the rest of the decade, throwing hundreds of thousands out of work and causing almost overnight disappearance of financial stability. According to Peter A. Davis, “conservative estimates indicate that as many as 400,000 people were out of work within one month after the start of the Panic. A year later the unemployed numbered nearly 3 million nationwide.”⁸¹ Many young women of the middle and even upper classes coming of age during the 1870s and 1880s must have found themselves unexpectedly faced with the necessity of earning their own living. Alberta Gallatin (b. 1861), daughter of a Confederate general, was said to have gone on stage for this reason, as was Agnes Herndon, and as discussed above, this was the story Agnes Ethel was hinting at by giving out a false Virginia birthplace. The father of Isabelle Evesson and her older sister, Estelle Clayton, may have been a victim of the “Panic.” Estelle made her stage debut in 1878, within a year of her father’s death, because he had left “little or nothing of the fortune once controlled by him,” and Isabelle followed her into the business.⁸² Indeed, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, 1880 saw the greatest percentage of women working in show business during the seventy-year period from 1870 to 1940. The war followed by the Panic may have been contributing reasons for this. However, the proportion of U.S. women coming from families with professional fathers (doctors, lawyers, financiers, inherited wealth) was already beginning to rise by mid century. The proportion of female performers from professional backgrounds had already risen from 17% for

⁸¹ Peter A. Davis, "From Stock to Combination: The Panic of 1873 and Its Effects on the American Theatre Industry," *Theatre History Studies* 8 (1988): 5.

⁸² "Alberta Gallatin," [1898], various clippings in Alberta Gallatin clippings file, BRTC; "Agnes Herndon," *Clipper*, 28 April 1888; "Estelle Clayton," *Clipper*, 18 April 1885.

those born in the 1840s, to nearly 26% for those born in the 1850s—entering adulthood during the war years. This again contrasts sharply with Sanderson’s British population, where those born into professional families during this period reached just 8.8%. It seems that in the United States, women brought up in the very heart and seat of the domestic ideal, women from professional backgrounds, most likely of upper middle class or wealthy families, were already beginning to consider theatre a viable life choice, even before the war.

Another way to look at the changes in background of actresses is to look at the backgrounds of those listed by Odell during the census seasons. Table I.9 shows that while the proportion of women with theatrical fathers remained fairly stable during the 1870 and 1880 census seasons, women with professional and wealthy fathers increased by 50%, from 20% to 30%. The performer population in the 1879-80 season would include a number of women born

Table I.9: U.S. Female Performers in Odell - Fathers' Occupations by Season

<u>Occupational class</u>	<u>69-70-71</u>		<u>79-80</u>		<u>89-90</u>	
Theatre fathers	28	52%	37	55%	24	26%
Professional & wealthy	11	20%	20	30%	53	57%
Clerical, sales, Civil Service	6	11%	4	6%	10	11%
Artisan & de-skilled artisan/ working class	9	17%	6	9%	6	6%
Totals:	54	100%	67	100%	93	100%

Deduplicated. Women counted in the first season in which they appear.

during the late 1850s and early 1860s, and according to table I.8, the 1860s was the birth decade from which women from professional backgrounds began to enter the theatre. Their entry into the business came mostly at the expense of those from artisan or working class backgrounds, whose participation in the business decreased precipitately 35%, from 17% to just 9% between 1870 and 1880. There was a similar percentage decrease of 33% during this decade in women from the new clerical or white-collar lower middle class, as well.

But the 90% jump in women from professional and wealthy backgrounds between the 1879-80 season and the 1889-90 season came mostly at the expense, proportionately, of women from theatrical backgrounds, rather than those from the working- and/or lower-middle-classes. This does not mean, however, that women from theatrical backgrounds could no longer find jobs in theatre. It just means that theatre as an industry beginning in the 1880s required a larger number of women than the limited population pool of theatrical families could provide. But the women from outside the profession who found jobs in theatre during the 1880s did not come from working-class or lower middle-class backgrounds. They came mostly from professional and wealthy backgrounds.

In 1902, Clara Morris wrote that only “a fortune, great influence, or superlative beauty” could help a girl coming “straight from private life” to get a start in theatre, in contrast to the situation when she herself started in the 1860s. Tracy C. Davis notes that in Britain, by the 1880s and '90s there was a perception that because of their ability to purchase highly fashionable costumes the cost of which far outstripped their salaries, the entrance into the profession of young women of the “moneyed, titled and bored” classes made it nearly impossible for working class women to enter the profession, or for “bona-fide performers” to obtain even minor roles.⁸³ As tables I.8 and I.9 indicate, there apparently never was a huge proportion of women from working class or artisan backgrounds entering the profession in the United States during most of the nineteenth century. The 14.5% of women from this background in table I.8 who were born in the 1850s is the century’s high for this class within my database based on Sanderson’s occupational categories. According to table I.9, the accumulation of actresses from similar working class backgrounds reached a high of 17% in the New York seasons of 1869-70-71 (the

⁸³ Clara Morris, *Stage Confidences: Talks about Players and Play Acting* (Boston, 1902), 15 ; Davis, *Actresses/Working Women*, 37.

period when Morris herself arrived). Women from professional and wealthy backgrounds did increase proportionately, not primarily at the expense of those from artisan and working class backgrounds, although such women may have found themselves the first to be cut out of entry-level positions, but at the expense, proportionately, of women from families in which the fathers had theatrical backgrounds.

However, tables I.8 and I.9 both indicate that the theatre profession in the United States was much more open to women from artisan/working class and clerical/white-collar backgrounds than it was in Great Britain according to Sanderson. Sanderson records almost no one from these backgrounds—2.9% from artisan/manual labor backgrounds in his earliest cohort, and approximately 1% in both later groups. Girls from lower middle class white-collar backgrounds don't even show up until the turn of the twentieth century. In my U.S. database, skilled and semiskilled laborers make up 17% of fathers' occupations for Odell-listed actresses working in New York during the 1869-70-71 seasons,⁸⁴ per table I.9, no matter what their year of birth, and girls from white-collar backgrounds make up 11% of female performers. Although women from the artisan and working classes decreased in each of the next two decades, according to table I.9, the proportion remains well above Sanderson's 1%, while those from white-collar families recover their 11% share by the 1889-90 theatrical season. And for reasons that probably have to do with increased immigration from Eastern Europe, and the rise in numbers of African-American performers, 13% of young women in my database born in the 1880s had fathers with working-class occupations, according to table I.8. Significantly, the 1880s is the birth decade that saw a decrease in women coming from the professional classes as defined by father's occupation, with a concomitant rise in those from the commercial/industrial sector.

⁸⁴ Some of these occupations include factory foreman (Maggie Cline), factory mechanic (Maude Granger), cabinet maker (Emma and Henrietta Vaders), ships' carpenter (Kate Crehan and her sisters, Ada Rehan and Hattie Russell) and barber (the Hyers Sisters).

And among those born during the 1880s, for the first time women born into white-collar lower middle class families make up a significant proportion of the database, at 8.7%. This cohort of women, of course, contains those that began performing in the mid-1890s and continued well into the twentieth century. According to Sanderson's figures, the theatrical profession in England (at least the "actress" part of it as opposed to the "chorus girl" part), was not as open to those from lower class backgrounds as was the profession in the United States during the latter third of the nineteenth century.

Comparison with Benjamin McArthur's Study

Benjamin McArthur's pool of subjects is drawn entirely from biographical dictionaries written during the twentieth century. This method guarantees that only those whose fame outlived them are included in his population—in other words, only the *crème de la crème*. Performers were included as long as "some portion of the player's career fell between the years 1880 and 1920."⁸⁵ Thus his data must be treated in the aggregate, as it is not possible to know the age spread of his subjects or even when they were most active. Finally, his data includes men and women together, and he does not say for how many of each gender he was able to find information on father's occupation. This means that comparisons between my data and his are a bit like comparing peaches and nectarines. However, because there are significantly more men than women in the sample he used for these calculations, we can see how dramatically the inclusion of men may change the results.

The point of McArthur's survey is to find out what broad class American actors came from (upper, middle or lower) and his categories do broadly reflect the make-up of nineteenth century American, as opposed to British, culture and society. His first category is "professional,

⁸⁵ McArthur, 31, note to table 6.

technical, kindred workers,” which is an occupational classification that first appeared in the 1950 U.S. Census. It includes anyone whose work requires education and/or specialized training, such as accountants, civil engineers, college professors and presidents, doctors and dentists, medical technicians, and actors, actresses, dancers, and other entertainers. It does not include managers, proprietors or officials, whether employed by others or self-employed⁸⁶—even though such managerial work might provide quite a healthy middle-class income. Because entertainers, specifically actors and actresses, are included in this “professional...” category, McArthur first states that 50% of actors had fathers from the professional class. Seventy-two of the 143 performers for whom he could obtain information on fathers’ occupations, or 50.3%, fall into this category. But as he later reports, “of the 72 fathers who were professionals, over half (37)

Table I.10: Parents' Occupations, U.S. performers

	McArthur	Braxton	
	Men and Women*	Fathers	Mothers
	<i>Parents (mostly fathers)</i> <i>(N=143)</i>	<i>(N=344)</i>	<i>(N=186)</i>
<i>Parents' occupations</i>			
Theatre in some aspect	26%	45%	76%
Professional/wealthy (See Appendix 2.)	25%	36%	5.4%
Ladies (from inherited wealth or upper class backgrounds)	na	na	10%
Managerial/small trade/proprietors/civil service	30%	7%	0.5%
Clerical, sales, and service	3%	4%	7%
Farmer (owners inc.)	4%	1%	2%
Skilled workers	11%	6%	0.5%
Semi- & unskilled labor	3%	2%	0%
Totals:	100%	100%	100%

*Source: Data extracted from McArthur, 31-32.

⁸⁶ Howard G. Brunsmann, ed., *Census of Population: 1950*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/21983999v2p1ch1.pdf>.

were actors themselves. Eighteen of the actors had one parent who acted professionally,” he states, “and 19 were born into families where both parents acted. Thus 26 percent of the 143 players had been born in the theatre.”⁸⁷ This information has been used in constructing table I.10 above. The differences between my database and McArthur’s figures are significant.

Comparing these figures with the findings in table I.8, it seems likely that many, if not most, of McArthur’s population were born in the 1880s or thereafter, when my data shows women coming into the business from professional and moneyed classes in greater numbers than from theatrical families. In addition, it is probable that the larger number of men in McArthur’s study cut his figure down to the 26% my calculations show for his population. Sanderson’s figures show that between 1880 and 1913, approximately 28% of British actors, as opposed to actresses, came from a theatrical background as determined by father’s occupation,⁸⁸ and McArthur’s 26% is very close to that. For women, it is clearly a different story.

The Importance of Mothers

Neither Baker nor Sanderson systematically collected data about actresses’ mothers’ occupations, although Baker does indicate in a few situations a mother who was an actress. In no case, however, do these mothers account for more than 6% of Baker’s total, and for the cohort that debuted between 1860 and 1890, he has no information on mothers’ occupations at all. McArthur clearly includes information on mother’s occupations when they are theatrical (see the quotation just above table I.9), but he does not mention mothers’ occupations otherwise. Information on mothers’ occupations has been more difficult to find than has information on those of women’s fathers. This is probably due to a number of cultural and social circumstances. The circumstance underlying all others is that under the domestic ideology always present even

⁸⁷ McArthur, 31-32.

⁸⁸ Sanderson, 331.

well into the twentieth century, a woman was expected to prefer keeping house to all other occupations. As discussed above, this is undoubtedly the reason why “keeping house” seems to have been the default occupation given to women by the all-male force of census enumerators in the 1870 census. In addition, to many people, male and female, a woman’s working outside the house was often an indication that the husband had failed to demonstrate his ability to support a family,⁸⁹ and might also indicate a less than middle-class background. Thus a mother’s occupation, if any, might not be mentioned by the actress herself in an attempt to “save face”—and class—for her parents and herself. Finally, most of those interviewing and writing about actresses during the period were men. For them, a father’s occupation might be considered of interest to their presumed male audience, but a mother’s occupation would be of little interest—unless she herself were an actress. This dynamic may still have been working in Baker’s, Sanderson’s, and McArthur’s assumptions that socioeconomic background consists in father’s occupation only, and their consequent disregard for what has turned out to be a vital piece of information. Whatever the combination of cultural circumstances, although information on fathers’ occupations is available for 45% of the database, information on mothers’ occupations has been found for just 24%.

Nevertheless, that 76% of those on whom such information is available had mothers in a theatrical profession is astounding. For women, having a father who is a member of the theatrical professions was extremely important. In fact, 73% of women whose mothers were in theatre also had fathers in the business. These women truly came from theatrical families. But if a woman had a mother in the business, it does not seem to matter what the father’s occupation was. Twenty-four women in the database come from families in which their mothers were directly connected with theatre, and their fathers are known not to have been, representing 13% of those

⁸⁹ Kessler-Harris, 72, 75.

women for whom mothers' information is available. Of these, only the large and rather vague catch-all fatherly occupation of "business" ("in business," "a businessman," etc.) provides any notable proportion of daughters to the theatre—5 of them, or 20% of the non-theatrical fathers married to theatrical mothers for whom there is information. The rest dribble in in ones and twos. Conversely, there is only one woman in this database whose mother was *not* a theatre professional but whose father was. Jeanette Bageard's father was a playwright, and her mother was a voice teacher—not very far removed from performance and performers, after all.⁹⁰

In addition, of the 186 women for whom information on mother's occupation has been retrieved, there are only 20 for whom such information is not available on their father's occupation. Of these 20, 13 of them or 65%, had mothers who were in theatrical professions, and an additional woman had a mother who can only be termed a "stage mother," – a mother who grooms and encourages the child with a theatrical career in mind, and manages the performer's career, at least at the beginning. Children of such mothers learn at an early age that theatre is something one does, can do, and/or is expected to do, just as do children of performers, and like children of performers, they seldom have any real choice in the matter. Therefore, stage mothers have been included in the "theatrical" category of parent employment.⁹¹

⁹⁰ "Jeanette Bageard," 1900?, clipping in Jeanette Bageard clippings file, BRTC. Bageard made her name playing the French maid in numerous comic operas.

⁹¹ In all, there are six performers in my database whose mothers I have designated in this fashion: May and Florence Irwin, vaudeville performers; Elsie Janis (b. 1889), variety singer; Elizabeth Menzeli, born in Germany, a dancer and later dance mistress who was placed in ballet school by her mother after her father's death; Maria Bonfanti, born in Italy, who entered a ballet school in Milan for the same reason; and Helen Dauvray, "Little Nell, the California Diamond," who later attempted to make the change to "legitimate" actress by training in Paris. In each case, the mother's desire and determination for the daughter's profession left the daughter no real choice. The mothers of Lotta Crabtree and Lillian Russell might also fit within this category, but Russell's mother had her own quite active career as a speaker and activist for woman suffrage, and Lotta's mother, who grew up working in her parents' upholstery shop, was running a California boarding house until Lola Montez, as well-known for her affair with the King of Bavaria as for her on-stage performances, became a neighbor, and changed everything. See: Janet Juhnke, "Irwin, May," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 457; Diana Serra Cary, "Janis, Elsie," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger (1989), 468; Ann Barzel, "Elizabetta Menzeli," *Dance Chronicle, Studies in Dance and the Related Arts* 19, no. 3 (1996): 277; Barbara Barker, *Ballet or Ballyhoo, the American Careers of Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli and Giuseppina Morlacchi* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1984), 172; "Helen Dauvray," *Clipper*, 30

The proportion of women with mothers in the business may be even greater than these figures make it appear. In my database, there are 80 women who are known to have started their careers as children, and whose mothers' occupations are unknown. Of these, 21 (26%) had fathers in theatrical occupations; 7 (9%) had fathers in the professional category; and 4 (5%) had fathers who were artisan, semi-skilled, or laborers. For the other 48—including Daisy Murdoch, and Marie Bates of *Zaza* fame—no information on either parent's occupation has been found at all. Whose idea was it to put these children on the stage? And why? The data collected suggests that at the very least, their mothers had some theatrical experience, and it is likely that their fathers had some theatrical connection, too. During most of this period, putting a child on the stage was not standard parental behavior, no matter what your class. Although upon occasion, a child might be spotted by a manager desperate to fill a part for an evening's performance,⁹² only those with some acquaintance with the theatre (or those with unfulfilled dreams of their own) would be likely to encourage a girl child to go on stage.

Having a mother who ran a boarding house also seems to have had some tangible effect on a young woman's decision to enter theatre. Of the 44 women whose mothers and fathers were *not* affiliated with the theatre, 9, or 20%, had mothers who kept boarding houses, and one had a mother who kept a small hotel (which may simply be a writer's euphemism for a boarding house), bringing the total to 23%. Boarding house keepers may have provided a role model for many young women, who might witness their mothers in a position of power over both female and male boarders, diplomatically negotiating prices and/or requesting payment, keeping some sort of profit-and-loss statement, and undoubtedly negotiating on her own behalf with the owner of the property.

January 1886; Donald J. Schwartz, "Russell, Lillian," ed. Roberts Robinson, and Barranger (1989), 761; Diana Serra Cary, "Crabtree, Lotta," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger (1989), 171.

⁹² [Annie Ward Tiffany], 31 January 1904, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC.

The only female occupation other than theatre to surpass boarding house keeper is that of “lady,” –women from wealthy families or families with high social and/or political status, who did not have to and had not been brought up to work. Eighteen actresses’ mothers clearly fall into this category—wives of diplomats, industrialists, financial or mercantile successes, or heirs to fortunes, and the occasional distressed gentlewoman.

The difference in theatrical involvement between mothers and fathers, however, is perhaps the most surprising. Table I.11 shows that when mothers’ occupations are included in the analysis, 100% of female performers born at the beginning of the century come from families of theatrical background. Even as the theatrical involvement of fathers begins to decrease, theatrical

Table I.11: Comparison of Mothers' and Fathers' Occupations by Birth Decade of Actress

	Mothers (N=186)				Fathers (N=344)			
	<i>1820- 1839</i>	<i>1840- 1859</i>	<i>1860- 1879</i>	<i>1880- 1889</i>	<i>1820- 1839</i>	<i>1840- 1859</i>	<i>1860- 1879</i>	<i>1880- 1889</i>
<i>20-year periods:</i>								
Theatrical	100%	72%	70%	57%	67%	47%	27%	44%
Professional & Wealthy*	0%	8%	16%	14%	18%	29%	55%	22%
Professional Women	na	7%	6%	7%	na	na	na	na
Clerical, sales, Civil Service	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	9%	11%	13%
Artisan & de-skilled artisan/working class	0%	13%	8%	21%	9%	16%	7%	22%
Totals:	100%	107%	106%	107%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*For Mothers, defined as women brought up and functioning as "Ladies," usually of the wealthy classes.

involvement of mothers remains extremely high. And among the 27% of women born between 1860 and 1879 to families in which the father’s occupation was non-theatrical, mothers’ backgrounds in theatrical occupations remained at 70%! This cohort of women grew up in families that would have been most affected by the Civil War and the “Panic” of 1873, with the concomitant need to earn their own livings. It is likely that their mothers’ theatrical experiences influenced their choice of work. Only in the 1880s, with the birth of those who would enter and

follow the profession during the 1890s and the early twentieth-century, does the percentage of mothers in theatrical occupations drop to a mere 57%. Of course, as mentioned in the introduction, the number of women in the database born in the 1880s is small, and 46% of them can be found in biographical dictionaries. In addition, 64% of parental occupation data on women born in the 1880s comes from those in biographical dictionaries, so for this group, information may be skewed towards women at the top of the profession, an unrepresentative number of whom may be from theatrical families. However, mother's occupation has proven to be of such significance in this study that it seems highly unlikely that additional numbers of women in the study would cause the percentage of mothers in show business to drop as low as the fathers' percentage, even with a higher concentration of variety and vaudeville performers.

In fact, looking at the Odell-listed actresses and their mothers' occupations suggests this may be the case. Although table I.9 indicates a severe drop in proportion of women from theatrical families in the 1889-90 New York season based on fathers' occupations, from 55% a decade earlier to just 26%, table I.12 below tells a different story:

Table I.12: U.S. Actresses in Odell - Mothers' Occupations by Season Listed

<u>Occupational class</u>	<u>69-70-71</u>		<u>79-80</u>		<u>89-90</u>	
Theatre mothers	26	87%	31	72%	33	69%
Professional	0	0%	2	5%	4	8%
"Ladies"	1	3%	4	9%	7	15%
Clerical, sales, Civil Service, small proprietor	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Artisan & de-skilled artisan/ working class	3	10%	5	12%	4	8%
TOTALS:	30	100%	43	100%	48	100%

Deduplicated. Women are counted in the first season in which they appear.

Sixty-nine percent of women active in the 1889-90 season for whom mother's occupation was available came from families in which the mother had been a performer. As late as 1889-90, the preponderance of female performers from this subset of the database came from theatrical, rather

than professional/wealthy families. This testifies to a great deal of marriage “out of the profession,” but it also testifies to the strength of tradition handed down from mother to daughter. Just how common theatrical mothers still were for women in the profession is illustrated in the beginning of a story found on The Woman’s Page of the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in 1891:

I know a little woman, and she isn't a half bad little woman either as women go. Well long, long ago this little woman was only a slip of a girl, and she went on the stage. She didn't take lessons from an expensive teacher, and study Delsarte, as slips of girls do now before they make their debuts as full fledged “stars.” No! this little woman commenced at the bottom of the ladder, as her mother had done before her; and gradually she went up round by round, until she was playing responsible business.⁹³

This “little woman” is placed squarely in a tradition of women going on stage as their mothers had done, obtaining their training by working their way up through the ranks. And her tale brings us to the final section of this chapter, a discussion of the training and education of the late-nineteenth century actress.

Performance Training and Formal Education

Information on performance training is fairly easy to obtain. Of the 762 women in the database, such information has been discovered for 424 of them, or 55.6%. However, information on formal education is available for just 136, and information on both for just 106. This section will look first, therefore, at professional training, and will then consider how this knowledge can be extrapolated and applied to the information available on formal education. Table I.13 provides an overview of the different types of training, or methods of entry into the profession, that have been identified from interviews, articles, letters, and biographical dictionary information:

⁹³ Victorine, "The Little Woman," *NYDM*, 25 April 1891, 6.

Table I.13: Performance Training/Manner of Entering Show Business

<i>Training category</i>	<i>Total #</i>	<i>%</i>
Onstage as child	164	39%
Teen/adult apprenticeship	109	26%
Professional theatre school	21	5%
Private coaching	31	7%
Amateur turned professional	29	7%
Music academy	17	4%
Private music instruction	42	10%
Professional dance school	11	3%
Totals:	424	100%

The proportion of those who began their stage careers as children averages out to 39% overall, as table I.13 shows. This is not surprising when we consider the high proportion of women who came from families with theatrical involvement. What is more interesting is the fact that, as table I.14 shows, the average proportion of those beginning their careers as children never dropped below 33%, or one-third, not even, or perhaps surprisingly, particularly *during* the last two decades of this study:

Table I.14: Performance training by birth decade (N=367)

	<i>before</i>						
	<i>1829</i>	<i>1830s</i>	<i>1840s</i>	<i>1850s</i>	<i>1860s</i>	<i>1870s</i>	<i>1880s</i>
<i>Type of training:</i>	<i>n=36</i>	<i>n=33</i>	<i>n=53</i>	<i>n=79</i>	<i>n=91</i>	<i>n=53</i>	<i>n=22</i>
Onstage as child	44.4%	45.5%	37.7%	32.9%	33.0%	41.5%	52.1%
Teen/Adult apprenticeship	33.3%	30.3%	22.6%	30.4%	29.7%	20.8%	21.7%
Professional theatre school	2.8%	6.1%	1.9%	1.2%	2.1%	17.0%	13.0%
Private acting study	8.3%	6.1%	11.3%	8.9%	7.7%	3.8%	0.0%
Amateur turned professional	0.0%	3.0%	1.9%	5.1%	11.0%	11.3%	0.0%
Music academy	2.8%	0.0%	5.7%	5.1%	5.5%	3.8%	4.5%
Private music instruction	2.8%	6.0%	13.2%	15.2%	11.0%	1.8%	8.7%
Professional dance school	5.6%	3.0%	5.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Totals:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Young women born in the 1870s were almost 26% more likely to have started their careers as children than those born in the 1860s or 1850s, and the limited study-population for those born in the 1880s shows an even higher percentage. Child performers were a major source of female

adult professionals throughout the nineteenth century, whether they can be identified as coming from a theatrical family or not.

The eleven young women who received professional dance school instruction might also be said to have begun their careers as children. These girls all began their dance training in the ballet schools of theatres or opera companies, most of them in Italy, and many as young as age six.⁹⁴ Beginning with the 16-month run of *The Black Crook* in 1866, dance spectacle became extremely popular, and dozens of ballerinas were brought over from Europe over the following ten years. Their ballet training comprised their entire education, not just their performance training.

Most of the 17 women who received their primary performance training at musical academies or conservatories followed an operatic or light opera career, but 4 of them, or 24%, spent most of their career in variety, vaudeville, or on the “legitimate” stage. These include Pauline Markham, second in renown only to Lydia Thompson herself among the British Blondes who travelled the country in burlesque during the 1870s, and Bertha Kalich, a Yiddish theatre star who was able to make the transfer to English-speaking theatre. Of the 42 who received musical training through private study, a large proportion came from families of musicians and were taught by their parents. Elizabeth, Mary, and Emma Maddern, for instance, left the (instrumental) concert stage they had grown up on under their father’s musical tutelage to enter stock theatre companies. Elizabeth became the mother of Minnie Maddern Fiske, and both Mrs. Fiske’s aunts supported her onstage when she became a star. Euphrosyne Parepa-Rosa was a highly successful opera star who received her vocal training from her mother, Elizabeth Seguin, also the child of a musical family. In other cases, the performer’s private training was in Europe

⁹⁴ Mrs. G.H. Gilbert started in the ballet at Her Majesty’s Theatre, London, Agnes Booth at the Victoria Theatre, Sydney, and Elizabeth Menzeli at the Stadt Theatre, Breslau. The other eight studied at Italian ballet schools attached to opera companies.

with a recognized master teacher. Caterina Marco, née Catherine Smith, granddaughter of Sol Smith and daughter of well-known Shakespearean actor Mark Smith; Blanche Roosevelt, one day to be the Countess D'Allegri; and Marie Van Zandt, all studied in Italy. Miss Van Zandt's first teacher, however, was her mother, who had been a member of the opera company managed and directed by Parepa-Rosa's husband, Carl Rosa. And, like Bettina Girard and Jenny Reiffarth, a number of those who began as vocalists ended their careers in non-singing roles in legitimate theatre, or even in vaudeville.⁹⁵

The rest of the women on whom information on performance training is available began their career as teenagers or young adults. Over the entire period, 26% entered the business as “utility” players or ballet girls in stock companies, in small parts in combination companies or touring stock companies headed by actor-managers, or as teen performers on the variety or vaudeville stage—what is termed here a “teen/adult apprentice.” The incidence of this type of apprenticeship declines as the century matures, precipitately for those born in the last two decades of this study, as can be seen by table I.14 above. Yet the slack does not appear to have been taken up by any one particular form of training. For instance, private study with experienced actors was one method of training even at the beginning of the century, and did not always preclude an apprenticeship type of position after that. Agnes Ethel, for example, first studied with Mathilda Heron, the great emotional actress known for *Camille*. “Miss Heron believed that her pupil needed more and sterner experience before assuming so responsible a

⁹⁵ Philip Hale, "How a Shakespearian Critic Encouraged Burlesque and Burlesquers," 3 February 1907, clipping in Pauline Markham clippings file, BRTC; "Mme. Kalich Dies; Famous Actress," *NYT*, 19 April 1939, obituary in Bertha Kalilch clipping file, BRTC; "Death of Mary Maddern," *NYDM*, 24 April 1912; *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Seguin, Arthur," by Nicholas Tawa, www.oxfordmusiconline.com; "Caterina Marco, Opera Star, Dead," *NYT*, 4 February 1936, obituary in Caterina Marco clippings file, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (hereinafter Mus. Div., NYPL-PA); "Blanche Roosevelt Dead," 1898, obituary in Blanche Roosevelt personalities file, HTC; *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Van Zandt, Marie," by Herman Klein and June C. Ottenberg, www.oxfordmusiconline.com; "Bettina Girard," *New York Journal*, 15 January 1893, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC; "Jennie Reiffarth Dead," *NYT*, 16 February 1913, obituary in Locke envelope, BRTC.

position” as a star on the New York City stage, according to an obituary of Ethel, and sent her to play in stock companies in the West. Within a year after this, Ethel went on to become one of Augustin Daly’s first stars when she opened in *Frou-Frou* in 1870.⁹⁶ Table I.14 shows that although this form of training surged somewhat with those born in the 1840s – entering the profession during or just before the Civil War – private coaching remained an unusual manner of entering the business, and one practically never used by those coming from theatrical families. Of the 31 women in this database who received private acting coaching, only two came from a theatrical family as far as can be determined. Catherine Sinclair was born in 1817 to a vocalist father and an actress mother, but never performed until after her very public divorce from Edwin Forrest. She studied with George Vandenhoff before going on stage to support herself. Rose Julian, born in 1868, was not in fact an actress, but an acrobat. Her private coaching was given by her mother, beginning at the age of five.⁹⁷ There simply was no other label to place her under, and she may in fact belong in the category of those who started as child performers. However, the *Clipper* article in which this information was found did not mention her beginning as a child performer. The rest of those who did receive coaching, with a few remarkable exceptions, seem to have come from wealthy or professional families, like Mary Anderson, Marie Wainwright, Adeline Stanhope, Agnes Herndon, and Margaret Anglin.

But for those entering the business from outside during the 1870s and ’80s, private coaching may have seemed old-fashioned. Amateur acting societies and the newly developing professional theatre schools seem to have taken the place of private coaching for those born during and after the war. Table I.13 shows that only 29 women over the entire period, just 7%, were amateur actresses turned professional. Most of these women were born during the

⁹⁶ "Death of Agnes Ethel Tracy."

⁹⁷ James C. Burge, "Sinclair, Catherine," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 792-793; "Rose Julian," *Clipper*, 19 January 1889, 713.

financially unstable period of the Civil War and the post-war decade. Table I.13 also shows that only 21 women out of 424 during the entire period covered by the database attended a professional theatre school, representing a mere 5%. This includes those who attended European institutes such as the Paris Conservatory, as well as those who attended schools of elocution, and the new theatre schools in New York and Boston that opened in the 1880s. According to McArthur, there were 370 applications for just 23 openings at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in 1887, the year after it had been reorganized from Steele MacKaye's Lyceum Theatre School, founded in 1884.⁹⁸ But most students at professional theatre schools in my database were born in the 1870s and 1880s, and thus were entering the profession during the 1890s and after the turn of the century. Even among these women, however, the percentage remains less than 20%. And as McArthur notes, even after the turn of the century, acting schools "did not attain the monopoly on training that other professional schools achieved."⁹⁹ In spite of the influx of women from the professional and wealthy classes, as indicated by tables I.8 and I.9, in spite of the rise in popularity of theatrical training programs during the latter part of the nineteenth century, this relatively expensive mode of entering the profession did not radically affect the manner in which most women of the nineteenth century entered the field.

A comparison of formal education and theatrical training in table I.15 reveals that of the 106 women for whom information is available on both, 13 women attended professional theatre schools, representing 12% of the entire category. Eight of those who went to a professional thea-

⁹⁸ McArthur, 100-101.

⁹⁹ McArthur, 103.

Table I.15: Performance Training Compared to Formal Education (N=106)

	Teen/Adult Apprentice n=33	Onstage as Child n=16	Professional Theatre School n=13	Private Acting Coach n=18	Amateur turned Professional n=13	Musical Academy n=2	Private Musical Study n=12
Convent	42%	38%	31%	16%	15%	0%	25%
Female seminary/ Girls School	30%	50%	31%	33%	0%	54%	50%
Public school	18%	13%	15%	21%	77%	0%	17%
Home Tutor	0%	0%	8%	21%	8%	0%	8%
College	9%	0%	15%	5%	0%	50%	0%
Percent of N:	31%	15%	12%	17%	11%	2%	11%

tre school, or 62%, had a convent or female seminary education, and two more, or an additional 15%, also had some college. Since attending a theatre school, as opposed to going onstage in a professional company, both costs money for tuition and does not bring in any money in wages, the ability to attend a theatre school, particularly after having attended a private girls school or college, indicates a family background of some means. Individual cases bear this out. One of those with both college and professional theatre school training was Rachel Crothers, better known today as a playwright. Both of her parents were doctors. The other, Helen Westley, attended the Brooklyn College of Oratory, Emerson College, *and* the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Research into census and business directory records indicates that her father was a druggist, although not successful enough to own his own home. Both women were born in the 1870s, and thus are members of the age cohort already noted in table I.14 as containing the highest percentage of women attending professional theatre schools. As the discussion of formal schooling below will confirm, the majority of such women came from successful professional, possibly even wealthy backgrounds.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Liz Fugate, "Crothers, Rachel," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 180; William Lindesmith, "Westley, Helen," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 918. See also listing for Charles P. Manny, *Brooklyn, New York Directories*, 1888-1890, Ancestry.com. Original data: *Brooklyn Directory, 1888-89* (Brooklyn, NY: Lain & Co.,

One might wonder at this point whether the ability to attend a professional theatre school significantly increased a woman's chance of success or stardom. As Tracy C. Davis, Benjamin McArthur, and I have all noted, biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias by their nature focus on the most successful performers. Therefore, an answer to this may be approached by looking at those for whom information came from such sources, and who therefore may be deemed the most successful (table I.16). Fifty percent of those listed in biographical dictionaries born in the 1870s were child performers, and 42% attended a professional theatre school. Only 8% of those born in that decade who made it into a dictionary started as a teenager unaided by other training. The proportions for the 1880s are more evenly distributed, but attendance at a professional

Table I.16: Performance Training of Women Found in Biographical Dictionaries, by birth decade (N=53)

<i>Type of training:</i>	<i>1850s</i> <i>n=16</i>	<i>1860s</i> <i>n=16</i>	<i>1870s</i> <i>n=12</i>	<i>1880s</i> <i>n=9</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Onstage as child	13%	25%	50%	33%	28%
Teen/adult apprenticeship	31%	31%	8%	33%	26%
Professional theatre school	0%	6%	42%	22%	15%
Private acting study	19%	13%	0%	0%	9%
Amateur turned professional	6%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Music academy	19%	6%	0%	0%	8%
Private study-music	13%	19%	0%	11%	11%
Totals:	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

theatre school still carries weight. Given the small proportion of women who attended such schools within this database, this is highly significant. For those born in the 1870s and 1880s, it would appear that the ability to attend a professional theatre school made almost as much of a difference in their likelihood of being listed in a biographical dictionary as did beginning their career as a child. In other words, achieving “star” status required either having been a child performer (most likely reflective of having a parent in the business), or attendance at a professional theatre school, which required (upper) middle-class or wealthy parents.

1889), (5 November 2008), 80004000; listing for Henrietta Manney (Helen Westley's mother), Ancestry.com Twelfth Census (1900), (5 November 2008), 45286810.

It is noteworthy that no one who started as an amateur made it into this exalted list except for Mary Shaw (b.1854), although 7% of women began in this manner over the period, almost all of them in the 1870s and '80s. Ms. Shaw had distinct familial advantages, according to Ellen Donkin, and once she made the decision to turn professional, was able to start as a member of the Boston Museum Stock company. Here her training in elocution, which she had undertaken to aid her in teaching, enabled her to fulfill the role of Chorus in a burlesque, an experience she described as being "shot up and down through a trap in front of the curtain before every scene" spouting "long explanatory speeches in blank verse." While at the Boston Museum, she supported Fanny Davenport during a starring tour and became part of Davenport's touring company for at least a season. She was then recommended by Davenport to Augustin Daly, with whom Davenport had spent nine years.¹⁰¹ Shaw's experience contrasts with many women who began as amateurs. Women who entered the business from amateur experience had a reputation for expecting to enter at star level, and many financed their own debut performance in a starring role in order to make sure they did so.¹⁰² They had no real training or apprenticeship, as Mary Shaw provided for herself. In addition, Shaw entered the field at a fairly advanced age (25), having already pursued a career as a teacher in the Boston public schools.¹⁰³ Thomas Dublin notes that teachers in public schools during this period had to undergo frequent classroom observation and critique by parents and schools committees, plus an annual display of their accomplishments in the form of final public oral examinations of their students.¹⁰⁴ This

¹⁰¹ Ellen Donkin, "Shaw, Mary," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger (1989), 784; "Mary Shaw," *Clipper*, 19 April 1890; Cole, 192.

¹⁰² See, for instance, "The Little Woman," *NYDM*, 25 April 1891, 6; "Lillian Olcott's Second Venture," *NYDM*, 20 December 1884, 3; "Marie Prescott," 22 November, 1879, unidentified clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC.

¹⁰³ Donkin, "Shaw, Mary," 784.

¹⁰⁴ Dublin, 215.

experience plus her family background undoubtedly gave Shaw an ability to handle herself and a sense of self-esteem that helped carry her to the top during a very long career.

The discussion of Mary Shaw’s family background and pre-stage career leads us to a further discussion of formal education as it relates to family background and professional training. Of the 762 women in the database, information on formal education has been discovered for 136, or just 18% of them. Data on 36% of these women came from biographical dictionary and encyclopedia entries. Thus, 64% of the 136 are at the very most, second tier, and many lower on the ladder of stardom and success than that. There is information on both formal education and performance training for 106 of these women, or 14% of the total database:

Table I.17: Formal Education of Female Performers

<i>Type of schooling</i>	<i>Formal Education</i>		<i>Formal & Theatrical</i>	
	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
Convent (RC)	43	32%	32	30%
Female seminary/Girls' school	44	32%	36	34%
Home tutor	10	7%	8	8%
Public school	29	21%	23	22%
College	10	7%	7	7%
Totals:	136	100%	106	100%

The largest difference between the two subsets is within the category of girls who attended a female seminary. This category represents 1.6% more of the total in the “Formal & Theatrical” than in the “Formal” side of the table. However, taken together, the proportion of girls who attended either a convent school or a female seminary is 64% in each group. According to this table, education of young women who would become actresses is fairly evenly distributed between convent schooling and female seminaries or private girls’ schools, with a significantly smaller though still healthy proportion of about 21.5% attending public schools. A very few young women over the century had home schooling and a very few, at the end of the century, had some college.

In considering formal education, it is important to understand that the figures in tables I.15 and I.17 show only that a girl or young woman attended school (or received home tutoring) for some period of time during her life. How long a girl went to school varied considerably, and this information is not generally available. For instance, Cordelia Howard, the most famous of the period's Little Evas, had no formal education until she retired from the stage at the age of 13, when she entered "a Cambridge, Massachusetts, school for girls," where she "completed" her education. How long that took is not stated.¹⁰⁵ Rosa France was sent to the Convent of Mercy at the age of twelve, after a career as a child, but was on stage again just two years later.¹⁰⁶ Olive Logan, according to Vera Roberts, "was educated at the Wesleyan Female Seminary in Cincinnati but was frequently pressed into child's parts in productions playing at her father's theatre." Her formal education may have been more interrupted than attendance at a female seminary would suggest.¹⁰⁷ Minnie Palmer débuted as a soubrette at age 17 "after a brief attendance at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Manhattanville, N.Y."¹⁰⁸ How long is "brief"? Eleanor Carey was said to have gone to "a young lady's academy" in New Zealand for five years, after her appearances as a child actress, but in an autobiographical letter to A.M. Palmer, she states she "did not remain long absent from the footlights as my Father had not left my Mother in affluence and I had to help her." The "five years" may simply be biographical re-invention.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to an autograph hunter, Mrs. E.L. Davenport, mother of Fanny Davenport and Bianca LaBlanche, among others, states that she was on stage from ages 3 to 9, then went to a "Boarding School" until the age of 15, when she reappeared upon the stage. We know,

¹⁰⁵ Diana Serra Cary, "Howard, Cordelia," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 449.

¹⁰⁶ "Rosa France," *Clipper*, 2 June 1888, 184.

¹⁰⁷ Vera Mowry Roberts, "Logan, Olive," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 552.

¹⁰⁸ "Minnie Palmer Dies; Soubrette Famed in '80s," *New York Herald Tribune*, 22 May 1936, obituary in Minnie Palmer clippings file, BRTC.

¹⁰⁹ "Eleanor Carey," *Clipper*, 6 December 1884, 599; Eleanor Carey, Autobiographical letter to A.M. Palmer, 1890, HTC, Union Square Theatre Collection-Autobiographies. Biographical re-invention and the reasons behind it will be considered in Chapter 2.

therefore, that she had six years of formal education, but it is by no means clear that this was the norm.¹¹⁰ Maude Adams attended the Collegiate Institute in Salt Lake City for some period between the ages of ten and twelve, but within two years was back on tour with her mother.¹¹¹ It was usual, in fact, for girls who began their careers early to go to school during the “gap” years, the two or three years when they were too old for children’s parts and not yet old enough for ingénue or soubrette roles. Della Fox was apparently unusual in that “there was not the usual hiatus between her stage childhood and maturity. From children's parts she directly stepped into prima donna roles.”¹¹² The educational hiatus could be as little as one or two years, like Rosa France and Maude Adams, or as many as four or five, as in the case of Elsie Leslie¹¹³ and possibly Eleanor Carey.

However, this spotty educational history, especially for those who began their careers as children, must be viewed within the general context of the education of girls in nineteenth-century America, a practice which underwent great changes, particularly during the period of this study. A somewhat *laissez-faire* attitude towards education of girls was not uncommon in the nineteenth century before and during the war, when many of the women in this study were growing up. Thomas Dublin found that common schools in rural New Hampshire were often open only for eight to twelve weeks in a year—for boys as well as girls¹¹⁴—and it was not until the late 1860s and the 1870s that most states initiated compulsory schooling laws.¹¹⁵ But the

¹¹⁰ Fanny Vining Davenport, Letter to Hon. Mr. B. Mckay, 1869, HTC, Autographed Letters Collection. It is worth noting with regard to the discussion on mothers' occupations, that although she gives the names of her father and uncles along with their lines of business (the types of roles they specialized in) she does not mention her mother at all.

¹¹¹ Kim Marra, *Strange Duets, Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1914* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2006), 91.

¹¹² "Career of Della Fox," *NYDM*, 25 June 1913, 25.

¹¹³ "Elsie Leslie," *The Theatre*, January 1902, 25.

¹¹⁴ Dublin, 221.

¹¹⁵ Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States, A Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 108.

necessity, or lack thereof, for girls' education had been under discussion in the United States for most of the century. As Thomas Woody notes, publicly-supported schools in New England were originally organized for "the education of men to the service of state and church. This wider service was not open to women and hence there was little argument in favor of their education as a public concern."¹¹⁶ In much of New England, girls' education had to fit itself around education for boys until the middle of the nineteenth century. Girls were not even allowed into the common schools in Rhode Island until 1828. And although there were four publicly-funded schools for girls established in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1804, they were only open for six months a year, and then only from 6:00am to 8:00am and on Thursday afternoons. It was not until 1842, when the town wished to subsidize a girls' high school out of a fund dedicated to providing education for "youth" that the word "youth" was ruled—by the Supreme Court, no less—to apply to girls as well as boys.¹¹⁷ Girls' education in New England was very much an afterthought.

In the middle states, where there were greater numbers of religious denominations than in New England, schooling was more dependent upon the dominant religious group within a region, according to Woody. Particularly in Pennsylvania (due to the Quaker, Lutheran, and Moravian influences), girls were taught "the three Rs" at least, in the same schoolrooms and during the same hours as boys.¹¹⁸

The female seminaries so many of the actresses in tables I.15, I.17, I.18, and I.19 attended generally would have had a recommended "course" of between three and five years,¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Science Press, 1929; reprint, 1966, Octagon Books), 147.

¹¹⁷ Mary F. Eastman, "The Education of Woman in the Eastern States " in *Woman's Work in America*, ed. Annie Nathan Meyer (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1891; reprint, Arno Press, 1972), 8-11, 20.

¹¹⁸ Woody, 195, 209-214.

¹¹⁹ Woody, 361.

but even outside the theatrical profession, few apparently stayed for the full course. In 1849, an ex-student of the Brooklyn Female Academy, who lived on an upstate farm, visited the room where she “had had [her] seat for nearly a year.” She found there a number of girls she did not know, “but here and there I found a friend.” Her formal schooling had amounted to one full term, while some of her friends were in school for at least a year longer.¹²⁰ Mount Holyoke Seminary enrolled 12,500 students in its first fifty years, but fewer than 2,000 actually completed the course and graduated.¹²¹ The 1850-51 catalog states that “While a regular course is pursued, only a small proportion are expected to go through the whole course,” and although students were expected to stay for a full year once they enrolled (a requirement whose placement at the end of the fourth page of the curriculum requirements appears to be an afterthought), it is also understood that they may “suspend study” for reasons of health, or if they wanted to study languages or ornamental skills. By 1860, the implication that students might leave before completing the term was no longer present in the catalog. Students were accepted on probation for the first three months, and the full-year residency requirement upon acceptance was placed up front.¹²² Similar attempts to regularize the education of young women can be found in the catalogs or “circulars” of less exalted female seminaries by the middle of the century. The Maplewood Young Ladies’ Institute at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, allowed girls to enter the seminary at any time during the school year, for preparatory or “higher or institute” work, and they could take either a full or partial program. Once there, however, they were expected to stay

¹²⁰ M.M.C., “A Leaf from Memory’s Table,” in *The Messenger-Bird Circular and catalogue of the Brooklyn Female Academy with the ... annual commencement exercises*. (Brooklyn: 1850), 66, New York Historical Society (hereinafter NYHS).

¹²¹ Mrs. Sarah D. (Locke) Stow, *History of Mount Holyoke Seminary During Its First Half Century, 1837-1887* (South Hadley, MA, 1887), 285, Mount Holyoke College Library, Archives & Collections (hereinafter MH).

¹²² “Fourteenth Annual Catalogue of the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Mass., 1850-51,” (Springfield, MA, 1851), 11-15 (MH); “Twenty-fourth Annual Catalogue of the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Mass., 1860-61,” (Springfield, MA, 1861), 17-19 (MH); Stow, 285.

till the end of the term¹²³ The Misses Green, whose School for Young Ladies during the 1860s was situated on Fifth Avenue, “first house from Washington Square,” discouraged early leaving by stating, “In case of the removal of a pupil before the expiration of the school year, payment for the full year will be required. No deduction made for absence.”¹²⁴ The Steubenville Female Academy’s 1874 circular states that, “Those who do not design pursuing the full course, may select such branches as are considered most advantageous.” In order to be considered a Graduate and receive a diploma from the school, however, a girl had to have followed the full course for two complete consecutive sessions (that is, fall and spring, or one complete year), and passed the examination.¹²⁵ Miss Annie Brown’s School for Girls during the early 1880s gave diplomas only to those who had completed a three year regular course, but the school accepted girls in the Preparatory program, and also allowed entrance to both courses “at any time during the School Year.” They would be charged “from this date to the close of the session. No deduction will be made for absences during the first month, nor *for any occurring subsequently*, unless caused by protracted illness.” (Italics in original.)¹²⁶ Although there was a movement towards regularization, attendance expectations at schools for young ladies remained extremely informal in comparison to twentieth- and twenty-first-century requirements. Some girls clearly stayed at school for shorter periods than others during the late nineteenth century, no matter what their backgrounds.

The curriculum of private schools for young ladies was beginning to be standardized by the 1860s. Of the eight school catalogs surveyed for this discussion, all, including Mt. Holyoke

¹²³ "Fifteenth Annual Catalogue," Maplewood Young Ladies Institute (Pittsfield, MA, 1856), 25, New York Historical Society (NYHS).

¹²⁴ "Misses Green, School for Young Ladies," (New York: 186_), descriptive circular and blank bill, NYHS.

¹²⁵ "Forty Fifth Annual Catalogue of the Steubenville Female Seminary" (New York, 1874), 11, NYHS.

¹²⁶ "Miss Annie Brown’s School for Girls" (New York, n.d.), unpaginated catalog, NYHS. The NYHS attributes this to the 1881-82 school year.

and the Young Ladies School associated with Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas, offered a Preparatory course, and all except Mt. Holyoke presented it as a separate program from the program termed the “Regular,” “Higher,” or even “Collegiate” course.¹²⁷ In all of these schools, acceptance to the more advanced program was contingent upon a girl proving her mastery of the material in the Preparatory course, either by going through the course at the school, or by examination. In most of the schools, preparatory work included reading, spelling and defining; geography and map drawing; written and mental arithmetic; English grammar, and composition. Bible study and recitation was a regular part of all school curricula surveyed, and vocal music standard in most of them. Three schools, including Mt. Holyoke, required Latin prose composition, and most required some knowledge of United States history and/or Universal history. Mt. Holyoke’s preparatory year was considerably more advanced than the others, including Sallust; algebra; ancient history; ancient geography; physiology; and Wood’s Botany. In fact, most catalogs specified the textbooks to be used, whether for the preparatory or the higher levels.¹²⁸ All eight schools stated specifically that the courses in the higher or “regular” levels were to be taken in the sequence in which they were laid out, whether the young lady was taking a full or a partial course.

It is unlikely, therefore, that Maude Adams’s or Rosa France’s year-and-a-half, for example, were spent in much more than preparatory studies, given the general examination requirements for entry into more advanced studies and their lack of previous schooling.

Interestingly, Woody states, after 1800, the subject of rhetoric “became as constant as English

¹²⁷ Mount Holyoke called their preparatory course the “Junior” year, but expected most students to enter at the “Junior Middle” or second year level, rather than the first. *Twenty-fourth Annual Catalogue of the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Mass., 1860-61*, (Springfield, MA 1861), 18.

¹²⁸ Wood’s Botany, Greenleaf’s Arithmetic, Harkness’s or Andrews and Stoddard’s Latin Grammar, were standard for most schools in both preparatory courses and the higher levels, as was Parley’s History.

grammar,” and elocution also became “increasingly popular.”¹²⁹ Of the eight schools surveyed for this discussion, five specifically list rhetoric as part of their curriculum for the third or fourth year of their higher-level course, and two offer elocution either as an optional or occasional subject of study for any student. Whether or not their parents were aware of it, then, many young women from outside the profession were being given some training for the stage during their seminary education.

With regard to publicly-supported schools, by 1860, according to Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, “both sexes in both rural and urban areas were able to participate extensively in schooling in their early years as students,” though urban children had a slight edge because their schooling was more regular. Most children were able to read and write by the age of nine. After this age, the amount of education a child received depended to a large extent upon the wealth of the family, and for most students, male or female, schooling was over by the age of fourteen. In 1860 just 43% of adolescents from the middling classes were attending public schools after age 15, and only 25% of those from lower economic strata were able to continue their education past this age.¹³⁰

The high proportion of women in tables I.15 and I.17 who attended either a female seminary or a convent school (not to mention those who went to college) indicates that this subset of the database is representative of women from the higher echelons, either of the theatrical profession, or of society. Coordinating their formal education with their parents’ employment class supports this hypothesis. Except for those on whom no parental employment data has been found, parents of the professional/wealthy class make up the highest percentage of

¹²⁹ Woody, 413.

¹³⁰ Soltow and Stevens, 128-129, 143-145.

parents for *all* types of schooling other than female seminaries, where girls from theatrical families are in the lead:

Table I.18: Formal Education Compared to Parents' Occupational Backgrounds (N=136)

<i>Parents' Occupations</i>	<i>Female Seminary/</i>				
	<i>Convent</i> <i>(n=43)</i>	<i>Girls</i> <i>School</i> <i>(n=44)</i>	<i>Public</i> <i>School</i> <i>(n=29)</i>	<i>Home</i> <i>Tutor</i> <i>(n=10)</i>	<i>College</i> <i>(n=10)</i>
Theatrical	30%	36%	10%	0%	0%
Professional/Wealthy	47%	30%	31%	80%	50%
Clerical/ White collar	2%	11%	7%	0%	10%
Skilled artisan/Working class	7%	9%	34%	10%	0%
No data	21%	18%	24%	20%	40%
Totals (percent of n):	107%	105%	107%	110%	100%

Totals in the above table equal more than 100% in most cases because of the presence of a theatre mother and a professional father, or an artisan father and a professional mother, for instance, in which case the actress is counted in each category. Girls with two parents in the same category are only counted once.

A quick check of those girls from theatrical families who attended the female seminaries, like those who attended convent schools, shows that their families were well-established in theatre.¹³¹ For children of theatrical families who did not enter the business until their teens, it is probable that they were placed in schools during their parents' touring—possibly with the idea of keeping them out of the business. It is very likely that those who had been onstage as children were placed in the schools during their “hiatus.”

Of the 21% of women who had a public school education in table I.17, it is interesting to note in table I.18 the fairly high percentage—31%—of women from professional (probably not wealthy) backgrounds, and not surprising to find that another 34% came from skilled artisan or working class backgrounds. As table I.19 shows, of the 143 young women for whom informa-

¹³¹ Viola Allen, Stella Boniface, Billy Burke, Chrystal Herne, Celia Logan (Olive's sister), all daughters of well-established performers or performer couples; Catarina Marco née Catherine Smith, granddaughter of manager Sol Smith and daughter of actor Mark Smith; Claire Strakosch, daughter of opera impresario Max Strakosch and opera star Clara Louise Kellogg, were attendees at female seminaries. Mary Boland, Effie Ellsler, Cissy Loftus, are some of those who attended convent schools, other than those mentioned in the text.

Table I.19: Type of formal education by birth decade (N=143)

	<i>b.</i> 1829 & <i>before</i>	<i>b.</i> 1830s	<i>b.</i> 1840s	<i>b.</i> 1850s	<i>b.</i> 1860s	<i>b.</i> 1870s	<i>b.</i> 1880s	<i>b.</i> No birth year
<i>Type of schooling:</i>	<i>n=6</i>	<i>n=5</i>	<i>n=17</i>	<i>n=25</i>	<i>n=40</i>	<i>n=25</i>	<i>n=16</i>	<i>n=8</i>
Convent	17%	0%	24%	36%	43%	36%	6%	25%
Girls' Private School/ Finishing School	17%	60%	47%	20%	25%	20%	50%	25%
Public School	33%	40%	12%	32%	23%	32%	38%	25%
Home Tutor	33%	0%	12%	8%	0%	0%	6%	13%
College	0%	0%	6%	4%	10%	12%	0%	13%
Total:	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table I.19a: Formal education of women with theatrical parents by birth decade (N=25)

	<i>b.</i> 1829 & <i>before</i>	<i>b.</i> 1830s	<i>b.</i> 1840s	<i>b.</i> 1850s	<i>b.</i> 1860s	<i>b.</i> 1870s	<i>b.</i> 1880s	<i>b.</i> No birth year
<i>Type of schooling:</i>	<i>n=1</i>	<i>n=2</i>	<i>n=3</i>	<i>n=4</i>	<i>n=5</i>	<i>n=4</i>	<i>n=4</i>	<i>n=2</i>
Convent	0%	0%	0%	75%	40%	50%	0%	0%
Girls' Private School/ Finishing School	100%	100%	100%	25%	40%	25%	100%	50%
Public School	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	25%	0%	0%
Home Tutor	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
College	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%
Total:	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

tion on both formal education and parents' employment is available, only 25, or 18%, have parents in theatre. Throughout the century, by far the greatest percentage of such women were educated in girls' private schools or finishing schools. Only two of the 25 women from theatrical families attended public schools, Ida Mulle (b. ca. 1869) in Boston, and Laura Hope Crews (b. 1879) in San Francisco. They may have been beneficiaries of the compulsory schooling laws, but their ability to attend a school that assumes permanent residency is a testament to their family situation as much or more than any increase in availability of public education. Peter A. Davis presents a convincing argument that the Panic of 1873 was responsible for the numerous stock theatre closings during the 1870s, and the conversion of many playhouses to variety houses and combination houses. These changes in turn led to one-night stands, limited runs, and constant touring for actors.¹³² Mulle's father was a musician rather than an actor, and thus able to find

¹³² Davis, "Stock to Combination," 7-9.

fairly consistent work among the various Boston theatres and musical establishments. Crew's father was a carpenter, and her mother an actress in San Francisco's California Stock Company.¹³³ Although both Mulle and Crews began performing as children, they both had uncommonly stable living conditions for theatrical children in the 1870s and '80s, and their public school education is testimony to that. What is somewhat surprising is that no women born before the war, when performers tended to stay in resident stock companies for entire seasons, claim to have been educated in public schools. It is possible that many women themselves took a public school education so much for granted that they never mentioned it (although of course, others *did* mention it), but these data lead me to believe that many women from theatrical families—particularly those who started as children—did not have much formal education at all. The anonymous author of a typescript biography of Effie Shannon in the New York Library for the Performing Arts seems to have come to a similar conclusion about Miss Shannon:

As to her education, all interviews and biographies are singularly reticent, stating merely that she was educated "in Boston." Since she made her earliest appearance at the age of three and appeared frequently as a child actress, it is possible that her schooling was rather informal.¹³⁴

In other words, she was taught to read. She may have attended a public or "common" school, from time to time, possibly until the age of nine. It is likely that the many child performers, whose parents were not stars and who themselves were not, had no further education than this, and either did not feel it was worthy of note, or did not feel it was something of which they could or should be proud. If they had been proud of the fact, more of them would have mentioned it.

¹³³ "Ida Mulle," *Clipper*, 9 August 1884; William Lindesmith, "Crews, Laura Hope," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 176.

¹³⁴ [Effie Shannon], typed summary of her career, BRTC.

Conclusion

This examination of the female theatrical population of New York City after the Civil War reveals a population fairly homogeneous in ethnic background. About two-thirds of those born before 1890 were born in the U.S. Nearly half of them were first-generation Americans. Twenty-five percent of the first generation Americans had parents from the British Isles. Further, approximately 60% of those who were immigrants came from the island of Britain, and another 12% from Australia and Canada. Culturally, the profession was overwhelmingly English. But being U.S.-born appears to have provided some advantage as the century progressed.

In comparison to the British theatre population studied by Sanderson, my data show a theatrical community considerably more open to those coming from the lower rungs of the economic ladder. But throughout the century, those entering the field from the outside had fathers who were predominantly from the professional and wealthy classes, rather than the working classes or even families in which the fathers held clerical and sales jobs, the lower middle classes. Beginning in the late 1870s and the decade of the 1880s, women with professional and/or wealthy fathers, began to enter the profession in greater and greater numbers. By the 1889-90 season, only 26% of women listed in Odell for whom this information was available came from theatrical families as determined by their fathers' occupations. Fifty-seven percent came from the professional and wealthy classes.

However, fathers' occupations do not tell the whole story. Although only 26% of those performing in New York City during the 1889-90 season had fathers in the business, of those for whom data on mother's employment is available, 69% had mothers who had been (or still were) in the business. Of this group of women, 70% of female performers born during the 1860s and 1870s (those likely to be performing in 1889-90) had mothers who had been performers, and of

the most successful actresses born during the 1880s, substantially more than half had mothers who had been performers. This testifies to a high rate of marriage out of the profession. It also testifies to strong family traditions of theatrical involvement by women that were not adversely affected by class or domestic ideology. Female performers patterned their lives closely upon the lives of their mothers, rather than in rebellion against them.

Female child performers who later became adult performers formed the backbone of the female side of the acting profession throughout the nineteenth century. The proportion of adult female performers who started as children never dropped below 30% according to this study. It is safe to say that of those who started as child performers, very few had much formal education. This indicates both a peripatetic lifestyle and a fairly low income level for the family, as formal education required at the least, a reduction of income from the child's labor, and at the most an actual monetary outlay for tuition. Only those whose families who were well established theatrically were able to take advantage of the increase in girls' schools during the period, whether public or private. Women who married within the profession may have found themselves scrabbling for a living, and encouraging, if not outright pushing, their daughters into the business as child performers themselves, continuing the mother to daughter tradition of performance.

In the next chapter we will look at particular reasons why so many women from the professional and wealthy classes said they entered the theatrical profession, and why they may have felt more comfortable entering the profession than conventional ideas about late nineteenth century views of the stage might indicate. We will also consider how this massive influx of women from the bourgeoisie and the elite affected the self-presentation of women who came from theatrical families.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHANGING STORY OF WHY WOMEN BECAME PERFORMERS

In 1832, Fanny Kemble arrived with her father Charles Kemble in New York. Kemble, the daughter of a famous, highly-respected British theatrical family, was preceded by the story of her enforced entry into acting. In spite of her family background, Kemble was portrayed in the press as a dutiful daughter who had become an actress at great sacrifice to herself. Schooled in a French convent, so the story went, Kemble had gone on stage three years before out of “that species of virtue, which is the purest and the best, and the most acceptable to the Father of Goodness and Mercy, filial piety!”¹³⁵ She did so only to help her father, who had gone bankrupt while managing the Covent Garden Theatre. Fanny Kemble, the public was told, had gone on stage to save her father.

At Kemble’s farewell performance at the Park Theatre that season was 14-year old Anna Cora Mowatt, at the theatre for the first time in her life in order to see the woman whose “name was on every body’s lips; her praises echoed from all sides . . . talked of as ‘a most devoted daughter and truly excellent woman’” due to her continued self-sacrifice upon the stage. Eight years later, at the age of 23, Mowatt herself began her stage career at the Reader’s lectern – reputedly the first American woman to do so. Having made the decision to debut in Boston, she made sure the Boston press understood that she did so, as the *Boston Atlas* of October 18, 1841 said of her proposed performance, “in consequence of reverses to which her family has been subjected.” According to the *Atlas*, there was “no more laudable object to which the talents of an accomplished woman can be devoted than this.” The stain of public performance for money was washed away by the redemptive nature of the act. It took Mowatt another three years to step from behind the lectern and onto the stage proper, and again, she let it be known that she took this step

¹³⁵ “Miss Kemble,” *Spirit of the Times & Life in New York*, 6 October 1832, 2.

because her husband's business failures and now failing health demanded this greater sacrifice.¹³⁶ Both these young women at the beginning of the nineteenth century presented their entry onto the stage as acts of self-sacrifice or redemptive womanhood. According to Lisa Merrill, Charlotte Cushman also claimed, early in her career, to have gone on stage "because a delinquent or negligent male figure left the entire family dependent upon her," presenting herself as a redemptive woman.¹³⁷ And in 1854, at the end of a biographical sketch, *Gleason's Pictorial Home Companion*, a woman's magazine, praised and excused Eliza Logan's career on stage by saying that "The death of her father left to her charge support of a mother and a family of younger sisters. How nobly she has toiled, it would not become us to state." Logan, oldest daughter of well-known comedian and theatrical manager Cornelius Logan, had been trained for the stage by her father, and like her younger sisters Celia and Olive, had gone on stage in children's parts from an early age.¹³⁸ The redemptive nature of her continuing career was an interpretation of the writer for an audience of middle-class female readers well before the experiences of the Civil War and the Panic had made work outside the home a necessity for many women of almost any class.

Throughout the century, the motives given for joining the profession provide strong indications not only of how the profession was viewed by outsiders, but of the behavior that was expected and accepted from women in general. And as Liza Merrill has said, "The selves we fashion in the accounts we tell others...reveal...not only the ways we want others to see us but

¹³⁶ Anna Cora Mowatt, *Autobiography of an Actress; or, Eight Years on the Stage* (Boston: Ticknor, Read, and Fields, 1854), 38; Eric Wollencott Barnes, *The Lady of Fashion, the Life and the Theatre of Anna Cora Mowatt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), 57-59; Boston Atlas qtd. in Barnes 54; Alice McDonnell Robinson, "Mowatt, Anna Cora," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger (1989), 680.

¹³⁷ Lisa Merrill, *When Shakespeare Was a Woman, Charlotte Cushman and Her Circle of Female Spectators* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 36.

¹³⁸ "Miss Eliza Logan," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, 8 July 1854, unidentified clipping in Eliza Logan clippings file, BRTC; "The Dramatic Calendar: 18 August 1829. Eliza Logan," n.d., unidentified clipping in Eliza Logan clipping file, BRTC.

also the ways we want to see ourselves.”¹³⁹ As Merrill looked at the stories Charlotte Cushman told about her own beginnings to understand how Cushman envisioned herself and how she wished others to see her, this chapter will examine the ways in which women from both non-theatrical and theatrical families presented themselves to the public, re-inventing and restructuring the events of their own lives to tell a new, more desired and desirable story of self that more closely resembled the idea of what “woman” was supposed to be. This chapter begins by examining the differing reasons women gave for entering the profession from outside in the context of the changes in expectations by and about women inspired by the Civil War and the Panic of 1873.

Reasons for Embarking on a Career in Theatre

Over and over again, scholars have shown that in contrast to women in teaching, domestic service, factory work, sewing, or even work based on the decorative female “accomplishments,” women in performance had a chance to earn as much as or more than a man in the same field and have some control over their own work.¹⁴⁰ Given the small percentage of women coming into the profession from working class or even clerical/lower middle class backgrounds discovered in Chapter One, we cannot assume that the major choices were between performance and factory or domestic work, nor that the only reason pushing these women into work was that they came from a background in which they would be expected to earn their livings, although in some cases this may have been so.¹⁴¹ What propelled a woman into the theatrical work force to

¹³⁹ Merrill, 16.

¹⁴⁰ For information on salaries for performing women in comparison to those of men, or other employment opportunities, see: Auster, 53-54; Rosemarie Bank, *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 94; Glenn, 13-14; McArthur, 23-25; Claudia D. Johnson, *American Actress, Perspective on the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984), 54-57. For similar information on British theatrical salaries see Davis, *Actresses/Working Women*, 18, 24-31.

¹⁴¹ Maggie Cline is known to have worked in a shoe factory. A story by Victory Bateman and Ada Patterson hints at a factory background for Georgia Cayvan. Census and city directory information show Cayvan's father was

begin with, *according to the stories she gave to the press?* Ten broad categories can be recognized under which the reasons American women gave for entering show business during the nineteenth century can be organized:

1. Family business: parents or siblings already involved in theatre in some form, so performing seems an obvious choice. Although women did not always discuss their theatrical backgrounds during their lifetimes, family show-business connections were usually mentioned in obituaries, even if nowhere else.
2. Redemptive womanhood 1: Father died or went bankrupt—rapid entry into the business after a death or financial disaster of the woman's father, either to support the woman and her family, or in the case of young children entering the business, as a form of immediate self-support.
3. Redemptive womanhood 2: Husband died or went bankrupt—rapid entry into the business after a death or financial disaster of the woman's husband, usually represented as self-sacrifice for the children or husband, but occasionally represented as necessary for self-support.
4. Self-support: This category includes women from working class families; those who, for whatever reason, tried some other manner of self-support, such as teaching or painting, before turning to theatre; and women whose families apparently had enough wherewithal after the death or bankruptcy of a male supporter to enable them to continue their educa-

a small-time entrepreneur like many other men of the period, first as a "water boatman" and then as a saloon-keeper. Lottie Gilson, "the little magnet," clearly came from the working class, according to an interview she gave during her period of highest success. Margaret Mather was a newsgirl in Chicago; her father ran an inn for merchant sailors. "Maggie Cline," *Variety*, 19 July 1934, obituary in clippings portfolio, BRTC; Ada Patterson and Victory Bateman, *By the Stage Door*, "The Passing of the Leading Lady" (New York: Grafton Press, 1902), 55.; 1860 U.S. Census, Bath, Maine, Ward 4: William T. Cayvin; Bath, Brunswick and Richmond Directory for 1867-8 (Bath: 1867), 19; Lottie Gilson, "The Soubrette," *Green Book Album*, n.d., 1045-1051 in Lottie Gilson clippings file, BRTC; "Margaret Mather," *NYDM*, 16 April 1898, obituary in Margaret Mather clipping file, BRTC.

tion and accustomed way of life, but who eventually found themselves responsible for their own living.

5. Chose theatre career: Women are placed in this category if they ran away to be an actress, and/or if they pursued the career without either claiming or denying economic need, and if there is no hard evidence regarding a need for self-support.
6. Married into the business.
7. “Fell in”: usually the story is that a producer spotted them somewhere, pulling them in off the street or out of a church choir.
8. Parent groomed: Women who were provided with serious training, typically musical, at an early age, usually with an eye towards a concert career. Girls who were placed in a ballet company or school are also included here, as are girls with “stage mothers.”
9. Self-support after divorce: Women who came from a financially comfortable background, and married men who were able to support them in the style to which they were accustomed, but who found themselves with no means of support after the divorce. Mrs. Leslie Carter would be a prime example of a woman in this position.
10. No reason discussed or discernable.

The reason for a woman’s entry into the business from a non-theatrical background is not always clearly stated. The assignment of a woman to these categories is subjective and relies upon my understanding of the period, in conjunction with information given to the press by the woman or her representative during her career or at her death. For a number of women who worked with A.M. Palmer at the Union Square Theatre, there is manuscript evidence, because Palmer solicited autobiographical letters from well-known actors/actresses and stars who had been members of his stock company. But for most performers, clippings files have provided the

bulk, if not all, the data. In more than half the cases, it has been possible to identify a sentence or a paragraph someplace which gives an indication of a motive for a woman entering the profession. Even when this has been possible, however, I have not assumed the information given is actually true or complete. Often there is missing data, and very often the story smacks of invention. What matters for the discussion below is what a woman (or her representative) *said* her motive was, and whether or not it seems to be invention. Of greatest significance when invention is suspected is the type of invention, the image or appearance the woman is attempting to promulgate, in the context of the shifts within the female theatrical population and in comparison with what is known through other sources about the woman, social conventions, and show business during the period.

An example of the type of scrutiny given these sources can be seen in the decision on where to place Cassie Troy. According to her 1882 obituary, Ms. Troy had “for a long time supported aged parents in a home she had earned for herself over in Jersey City.... Miss Troy also leaves a grown-up son.” Since the obituary does not mention that her parents once were in the business, family business can be ruled out. The obituary mentions that she had been in the business for fifteen years, and that she was between 35 and 40 years old; so it is likely that she went on stage very soon after the Civil War, probably in 1867, and that her son was very young at the time.¹⁴² This militates against putting her into the “chose theatre career” category. It is possible that her husband died in the war or soon afterwards, but as no husband is mentioned, it is equally possible that there was no husband. Therefore she cannot be assigned to the “husband died” category. This all certainly indicates a need for self-support and support of her son, but further than that one cannot take it. Although the “long-time” support for “her aged parents”

¹⁴² "Cassie Troy Dead," *NYDM*, 9 December 1882, 7.

indicates a bias in favor of redemptive womanhood on the part of the obituary writer, she has been assigned to the “self-support” category.

Marie Wainwright, on the other hand, was the granddaughter of a Bishop of the Episcopal Church and daughter of Commodore Wainwright, killed during the Civil War when she was five. She debuted in 1877, after training with then well-known leading lady Fanny Morant, by hiring out Booth’s Theatre for a matinee. The always acerbic critic of the *Spirit of the Times* stated that, “She read her lines like an accomplished school girl of nineteen, and acted with the intensity of a marionette...” He finishes her off by saying,

If Miss Wainwright is obliged to adopt the dramatic profession through pecuniary necessity, it is to be regretted that the large sum of money expended by her friends on flowers was not placed at her disposal. It could have defrayed the expenses, for some months, of any unextravagant lady.¹⁴³

Eleven years later, the *New York Clipper* again suggests about Miss Wainwright that “A reverse of fortune, we believe, was directly responsible for turning her thoughts to the stage.”¹⁴⁴ But throughout her long career, which included the position of leading lady in Lawrence Barrett’s Shakespeare company, starring with her own company, and headlining in vaudeville before returning to the “legitimate” Broadway stage, Marie Wainwright herself never gave any reason for her decision to enter the field. While the *Clipper* is probably right, the fact that she never confirmed or denied the assumption leads me to place her in the category of those who chose to follow a career in theatre.

A Family Business

Of the 762 women in this database, it has been possible to find indications of motives for entering the business for 434 of them, representing 57%. Of these 434 women, 217, or 50%, fall

¹⁴³ “Miss Wainwright's Debut,” *Spirit of the Times*, 26 March 1877, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC. *Spirit of the Times* hereinafter called *Spirit*.

¹⁴⁴ “Marie Wainwright,” *Clipper*, 21 April 1888.

into the “family business” category. Women are placed in this category if their mother or father were performers, or because one member of the family entered the business and siblings followed. For instance, Mrs. Oliver Dowd Byron, *née* Kate Crehan,¹⁴⁵ entered the business for reasons that cannot be determined from information available. Therefore she is not counted in table III.1. Her siblings Harriet (Hattie) Russell, Ada Rehan, and Arthur Rehan entered the business because Kate was in it and gave them a protected entrée. Ada travelled with Kate and her husband starting at about the age of 16.¹⁴⁶ Thus Ada and Harriet are designated as having entered the business because it had become a “family business.” Estelle Clayton received news of her father’s death while she was in her last year of school. She was offered a scholarship so she could finish, according to the *Clipper*, “but the generous offer was not accepted, for there

Table II.1: Reasons women went on stage during the 19th century (N¹=434; N²=217)

<i>Motive</i>	#	% of N ¹	% of N ²
Family business	217	50%	n/a
Father died/bankrupt	28	6%	13%
Husband died/bankrupt	12	3%	6%
Self-support	31	7%	14%
Chose career	76	18%	35%
Married in	9	2%	4%
Fell in	22	5%	10%
Parent groomed	32	7%	15%
After divorce	7	2%	3%
Total including			
Family business (N¹)	434	100%	n/a
Total excluding			
Family business (N²)	217	50%	100%

were other and sterner duties before the young girl. She returned to her home, and at once prepared herself for [a] professional career” as an actress. Estelle has been assigned to the “father

¹⁴⁵ Crehan was the family name of Kate O’Neill, later Mrs. Oliver Dowd Byron; Hattie Russell; Ada Rehan; and their brother Arthur Rehan. According to Rita Plotnicki, Ada Crehan became Ada C. Rehan due to a printer’s error on a playbill early in her career. Rita M. Plotnicki, “Rehan, Ada,” ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 739.

¹⁴⁶ Plotnicki, 739. See also U.S. Federal Census, 1870, King’s County, 12th Ward, p. 121 (Ancestry.com). Oliver Byron and his wife Mary (Mary Katherine), both actors, were staying with the Crehan family on census day. Harriet, age 20, is also listed as an actress. Delia (Ada Delia) and Arthur, aged 13 and 7 respectively, are in school. Their father’s occupation is listed as a ship’s carpenter.

died/ bankrupt” category. Her sister Isabelle Evesson, however, entered the business nearly two years later, accompanied by her mother to audition for Augustin Daly, in whose company Estelle had already found a place.¹⁴⁷ Isabelle was five years older than Estelle; perhaps she had found her family’s financial condition a hindrance in the marriage market. Even though it is unlikely that either woman would have entered the theatre if their father had not gone bankrupt (let alone died), there was enough money for Isabelle to remain “in private life,” as it was often termed, for at least two years after her younger sister had led the way. Undoubtedly, Isabelle needed to support herself. But Estelle had set a successful example, and probably getting started was easier for her than for Estelle. Isabelle has therefore been assigned to the “family business” category

Because of additions such as these, women from theatrical families as measured by “family business” make up five percent more of the female theatrical population during the nineteenth century than was apparent using father’s employment alone as an indicator.¹⁴⁸ The “family business” category discussed here includes the subset of women known to have mothers in the business, and the subset of those known to have fathers in the business, which substantially overlap each other, plus a new subset of women with brothers or sisters involved as well.

As table III.2 shows, there is a significant drop in the percent of performing women born into theatrical families during the 1850s and 60s. These women would have been entering the business during the 1870s and 80s. But whereas in Chapter One, data based on father’s occupation showed a continued and severe drop in women from theatrical families born during the 1870s, when both mothers and siblings are counted in this category, the percentage of women from a theatrically-related family born during the 1870s rises sixteen percentage points to 54%,

¹⁴⁷ "Estelle Clayton."; "Isabelle Evesson," *Clipper*, 18 June 1887.

¹⁴⁸ This is to remind the reader that Chapter One's overwhelming figure of 76% of female performers with mothers in the business (and thus of theatrical families) is based on the 24% of the entire database for whom I found information on mother's occupation. Using father's occupation provides a larger sample of the database.

Table II.2: Reasons for entering show business (N=433)*

<i>Reason</i>	<i>b. 1829</i>	<i>b.</i>	<i>b.</i>	<i>b.</i>	<i>b.</i>	<i>b.</i>	<i>b.</i>	<i>No</i>
	<i>& before</i>	<i>1830s</i>	<i>1840s</i>	<i>1850s</i>	<i>1860s</i>	<i>1870s</i>	<i>1880s</i>	<i>birth</i>
	<i>n=34</i>	<i>n=32</i>	<i>n=47</i>	<i>n=80</i>	<i>n=98</i>	<i>n=49</i>	<i>n=28</i>	<i>n=63</i>
Family business	54%	53%	54%	46%	37%	54%	50%	5%
Father died/bankrupt	9%	16%	4%	6%	11%	2%	4%	0%
Husband died/bankrup	9%	6%	0%	4%	2%	0%	0%	9%
Self-support	0%	3%	7%	9%	15%	4%	0%	14%
Chose theatre career	14%	9%	9%	17%	16%	28%	21%	59%
Married in	0%	3%	7%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%
Fell in	0%	3%	4%	7%	7%	6%	4%	9%
Parent groomed	11%	6%	11%	7%	6%	4%	21%	5%
After divorce	3%	0%	4%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Total excludes one woman in database born in 1890s.

commensurate with figures earlier in the century. Theatre continues to be a family business through the post-reconstruction period. Most of the difference between these figures and those from Chapter One is the effect of counting mothers' occupations, but some of it is sibling influence, as table II.3 shows:

Table II.3: Women in "Family business" category with sibling connections

<i>Birth decade</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>w/known</i>	<i>w/sibs</i>	<i>w/sibs</i>
	<i>sibs</i>	<i>only</i>	<i>only</i>
1870s	11	3	27%
1860s	14	4	29%
1850s	17	2	12%
1840s	13	1	8%
1830s	12	0	0

Of women born in the 1830s with siblings in the business, none came from families in which their siblings were their only connection with show business. At least one parent in each family was also in the business. These women and their siblings were members of true theatrical families. Of women born in the 1840s, Belle Celeste is the only one who appears in the database with just siblings in the business. No information was found on her parents' occupations. However, as Belle and her two brothers were all acrobats, and this is a field of performance

traditionally handed down in families in which children begin their training very young, it is probable that in fact she came from a family with acrobatic parents. If that were so, again, the percent of women born in the 1840s with siblings as the only connection to show business would be zero. The two women with only a sibling connection born in the 1850s are Harriett Russell and Ada Rehan, both sisters of Kate Crehan Byron, discussed above. But after that, the story changes. Twenty-nine percent of women born in the 1860s, and 27% of those born in the 1870s had no family connection with the theatre other than a sibling. Although they had a family connection to show business, these women, like their siblings, like the Evesson sisters, Estelle and Isabelle, were new arrivals in the business. A theatrical career was “catching.”

Entering from the Outside

The discussion above is based upon data for the 217 women who came from theatrical families, representing exactly half of the 434 women for whom an indication was available of why they might have become performers. The discussion below is based upon data for the remaining 217 women in that group. Both sets represent 28% of the total database. While it is impossible to say for certain that the 43% of the database (328 women) for whom no information has been found on why they became performers would follow the patterns noted in this chapter, it is extremely likely. In the examples below, I discuss as broad a sample as possible in order to fully delineate the patterns I see, rather than selecting and discussing one or two women in each group who might be designated as typical. For the smaller groups, these discussions may include most of the individuals within the group.

So why did women say they had decided to enter theatre to begin with? As table II.4 shows, early in the century, self-sacrifice (or redemptive womanhood), was the primary reason given for entering the profession from outside. Forty percent of women born in the first three

decades, and 46% of the women born in the 1830s presented their entry into theatre as necessary in order to support the rest of their family after the death or financial failure of a male supporter. But there is one very unexpected result: over the entire period, unlike Mowatt and Cushman, and unlike theatrical daughters Fannie Kemble and (purportedly) Eliza Logan, the largest proportion of women in the nineteenth century coming from outside the profession did not excuse their entry into show business by advancing the necessity of self-sacrifice. Over the course of the century, thirty-seven percent of women entering from outside the business preferred to give the impression that they chose to follow a career as an actress, the overall reason most frequently presented.

There are measurable differences in percentage rates for “chose theatre career” as the century progresses. The lowest proportion of women presenting or suggesting choice as a reason for entering the business were born in the 1830s and 40s, the period of the formation and heavy

Table II.4: Reasons for entering show business, minus "family business" (N=216)*

<i>Reason</i>	<i>b. 1829 & before n=16</i>	<i>b. 1830s n=15</i>	<i>b. 1840s n=21</i>	<i>b. 1850s n=44</i>	<i>b. 1860s n=62</i>	<i>b. 1870s n=23</i>	<i>b. 1880s n=14</i>	<i>b. No birth year n=21</i>	<i>Century total</i>
Father or husband died/bankrupt	37%	46%	10%	18%	21%	4%	7%	10%	19%
Self-support	0%	7%	14%	16%	24%	9%	0%	14%	11%
Chose theatre career	31%	20%	19%	32%	26%	61%	43%	62%	37%
Married in	0%	7%	14%	5%	3%	4%	0%	0%	4%
Fell in	0%	7%	10%	14%	11%	13%	7%	10%	9%
Parent groomed	25%	13%	24%	14%	10%	9%	43%	5%	18%
After divorce	6%	0%	10%	2%	5%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*The database includes one woman born in the 1890s, whose reason for entering the business was her choice. She is not included in this table. Thus "N" is 216, rather than 217.

promulgation of domestic ideology. The highest proportion were women born in the 1870s (63%), most likely entering the business in the late 1880s and early 1890s. This was the generation of the “New Woman,” including performers such as Margaret Anglin, Trixie

Friganza, and playwright Rachel Crothers, who began her career as an actress,¹⁴⁹ all familiar today to American theatre historians.

The exigencies of post-Civil War family economics, along with the financial collapse of the 1870s undoubtedly affected these women's decisions to work outside the home, and made working for a living more acceptable and respectable even for women of the middle- and upper middle-class. Dorothy S. Pam recognizes a change in the presentation of working women in the working girl melodramas of the 1870s and 1880s. Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl, in the play of that name (1871) is working to help her father pay the rent, and according to Pam, never questions that her future plans, including her marriage, must meet with her father's approval. [90 and 110-111]. Adele the Saleslady, ten years later, is "self-supporting not only out of necessity, but out of choice....her self-respect requires her to be self-supporting." As Pam says, this play "makes it clear that it is acceptable for the working girl heroine to work outside of her home with no diminution of her honor."¹⁵⁰ But the change in reasons publicized for entering the *theatre* (as opposed, for instance, to teaching or saleslady) from "self-sacrifice," the accepted redemptive rationale, to "chose theatre career," is remarkable. Much of it may have been due to women's new understanding of their position as independent agents with a responsibility to and for themselves, as reflected in the working girl melodrama. This would enable them to admit that they made a conscious choice to work, and a conscious choice to work *in theatre*. In addition, however, it may be that it was no longer so necessary for women in theatre to advance "redemption" as a means of maintaining "virtuous woman" status, because of changes in theatre culture that began in the late ante-bellum period.

¹⁴⁹ Fugate, 181.

¹⁵⁰ Pam, 90, 110-111, 153.

Theatres, Prostitution, and the Performer's Reputation

Many years ago, Claudia D. Johnson documented the presence of prostitutes in the third tier, or gallery, of early American theatres, even those catering first and foremost to the upper classes, such as the John Street Theatre, the Park Theatre, and Niblo's Garden in New York. Helen Jewett, a prostitute who was murdered in her room in a "genteel" brothel in Thomas Street in 1836, was known to have met her clients, including the man arrested for her murder, in the third tier, or gallery, of the Park Theatre. Both William Dunlap, perhaps the earliest historian of U.S. theatre, and Noah Ludlow, the manager of the mid-century Western circuit, discuss the presence of prostitutes in the galleries of theatres in Boston, New York, Louisville, St. Louis, Mobile, and New Orleans, during the early part of the century.¹⁵¹

It is possible, as Rosemarie Bank suggests, that due to gender or class bias, or both, working women in the third tier may have been overlooked by male observers, or considered as prostitutes by middle-class observers, owing to the fact that they were seated in the gallery. Christine Stansell's description of the Bowery G'hal of the 1840s throws doubt upon the absolute restriction of the third tier to prostitutes and their clients as described by Johnson. But as Bank also states, "women earning half the [male] skilled rate, \$3.00-\$3.50 for a six-day workweek, would find a twenty-five-cent gallery ticket half or more of a day's wage," and those working in the sweated trades, earning between \$1.00 and \$3.00 a week would find it nearly impossible.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Claudia D. Johnson, "That Guilty Third Tier: Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century American Theaters," *American Quarterly* 27 (1975); See also William Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London 1833), 407-411; Noah M. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It* (St. Louis 1880), 478-479; Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 77-78, 111-112, 251; Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 67.

¹⁵² The above is taken almost verbatim from note 1 of Braxton: 31; see also McConachie, 173; Christine Stansell, *City of Women, Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860* (New York: New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 92-96; Bank, 132 vs. 92.

It is unlikely therefore, that young working women took themselves to the theatre on any regular basis in the pre-Civil War era.

According to Timothy Gilfoyle, “treating,” in which a woman might be taken out for drinks or taken to the theatre, was described by sexual guidebook author George Ellington as a form of sexual exchange in 1869.¹⁵³ Undoubtedly, the practice had developed before Ellington dignified it in print. Stansell briefly discusses “exchanging sexual favors with male escorts for money or food and drink” as a way young women of the Bowery “got by.” “Sexual favors” did not necessarily mean intercourse; it could mean just “feeling of him” or other sexual activities.¹⁵⁴ These young women were no more prostitutes than teenaged women of our own day who engage in similar practices. And “treating” could include being taken to the theatre upon occasion. In *A Glance at New York*, for instance, the famous play in which Moze the Bowery B’hooy made his first appearance, and in which his G’hal Lize also appears, Lize asks Moze if he is going to take her to the “wawdeville,” but he takes her to Vauxhall Gardens instead. The nine donuts and the cup of coffee he buys her might be considered “treating,” although Moze seems more interested in participating in a street fight than in sexual favors.¹⁵⁵ But Lize’s question shows that a trip to the theatre was not out of the question as a “treat.” Women attending the theatre in the gallery or third tier under this arrangement might be mistaken by more middle-class critics as prostitutes. However, during the 1820s, 30s, and 40s the third tier was known to be a site of sexual assignation between prostitutes and their clients, often opening hours before the play began so that the women could enter and make themselves comfortable before the more respectable

¹⁵³ Gilfoyle, 56, 288. Ellington was the author of *The Women of New York; or, The Under-World of the Great City*.

¹⁵⁴ Stansell, 176, 184.

¹⁵⁵ Excerpt from the play found in Mark Caldwell, *New York Night: The Mystique and Its History* (New York: Scribner, 2005), 124, <http://books.google.com/books?id=SnXFrijKzPd4C>.

audience members, particularly the women, arrived.¹⁵⁶ Since actresses worked in these houses of assignation, by extension they sold their talents and their physical presences in aid of the brothel business. Their standing as virtuous women was morally ambiguous, at best. Therefore, women who entered theatre from outside the profession had to advance a strong redemptive reason for doing so.

The situation *vis à vis* prostitution in the theatres began to change during the 1840s and 1850s. According to Stansell, William Sanger states that the Park Theatre closed the third tier to prostitutes in 1842 and by the mid-1850s, when he wrote his report on prostitution in New York “other theatres patronized by the genteel were following suit.”¹⁵⁷ As I have noted elsewhere, Miles Kimball, manager of the Boston Museum, and P.T. Barnum at his museum theatres in New York and Philadelphia “made serious attempts during the 1840s to attract family and female audiences to their theatres by excluding saloons and bars, prostitutes, and other dubiously behaving audience members from their ‘lecture halls.’”¹⁵⁸ By the mid-1850s, the movement to rid middle-class theatres of prostitutes had picked up momentum. In her 1854 autobiography, Anna Cora Mowatt congratulates the two major Boston theatres, the Howard Athenaeum and the Boston Museum theatre, “and, indeed, all the theatres in that city, for five years, and [...] Niblo's, in New York, for a period even longer” for removing the “demoralizing effect of allowing any portion of the theatre to be set aside for the reception of a class who do not come to witness the play. I believe there have been other theatres in this country,” she continues, “where this outrage upon morality is not tolerated, . . . But,” she delicately states, “this is a difficult topic for a woman to touch upon.” By 1870 however, Olive Logan was able to say with no

¹⁵⁶ Johnson, "Guilty Third Tier," 577-578.

¹⁵⁷ Stansell, 174.

¹⁵⁸ Braxton: 17-18; McConachie, 163-164.

embarrassment that as far as she was aware, the “guilty third tier” had finally been eliminated from theatres across the country.¹⁵⁹

It is possible, therefore, that the abolition from theatres of the business of prostitution as part of the enterprise enabled women from middle-class backgrounds to feel more comfortable in admitting or advancing the idea that they had not only chosen to work but chosen to work in *theatre*. But the disappearance of prostitutes from the third tier of the theatre certainly did not remove them from the theatre audience. It only removed them from visibility. For instance, Noah Ludlow states that in his theatres, he refused admission to “any woman who did not come attended by a gentleman, or someone having the appearance of a man of respectability.” The key word in this passage is “appearance.” As long as the man appeared respectable, and as long as the woman was not openly known as a prostitute, the woman was allowed in.¹⁶⁰ In New York City, of course, it would have been much more likely that high-class prostitutes continued to attend the theatre under this cover. The city’s population was so much larger than that of Ludlow’s St. Louis, Louisville, Mobile, or even New Orleans, that it would have been difficult for any theatre manager to know by sight all women who were members of that profession. However, the open provision for and carrying on of business would have been severely curtailed as more and more theatres closed the third tier to prostitutes or took it out completely.

As the above discussion indicates, before the Civil War the closing of theatres to prostitution took place on a theatre by theatre basis, and was probably related to class and location. However, information on which theatres encouraged and which closed out prostitutes when is not available in any compiled form. Even Timothy Gilfoyle, in his massive study of New York City prostitution, does not provide this type of information. When he does mention specific

¹⁵⁹ Mowatt, 445; Olive Logan, *Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes: A Book about 'The Show Business' in All Its Branches* (Philadelphia and Cincinnati: Parmelee & Co, 1870), 542.

¹⁶⁰ Ludlow, 479.

theatres, such as Mitchell's Olympic (variety) or the Bowery (blood and thunder melodrama) his sources are just those that might be considered most likely to confuse working girls (in the literal sense) for prostitutes, and treating for prostitution: Frances Trollope, Horace Greeley, journalist George Foster, and sexual guides such as the *Rake* and writer George Ellington.¹⁶¹ Further research must be done to establish any sort of pattern. Gilfoyle does mention a group of theatres which he calls "sub-theatres"—"small, minor theatres" in which because of size, "prostitutes were not segregated but ventured freely through the premises." George Foster in 1849 called these places "little better than a brothel turned inside out," and just before the war, George Templeton Strong berated "lager-beer saloons and low theatres" as "dismal." Gilfoyle calls these places "burlesque palaces,"¹⁶² but that is an anachronism. Burlesque did not have the connotation of a strip show until the late 1870s.¹⁶³ His use of the term may indicate, however, the type of "theatre" that went on in these establishments. Many of them may have housed model-artist shows, *tableaux vivantes* in which women dressed in silk tights—or sometimes not even that—and posed as figures from works of art, such as perhaps, Botticelli's Venus. In 1847, Gilfoyle states, at Palmó's Opera House, "the performers abandoned their stationary pose and proceeded to dance the polka and minuet while completely nude."¹⁶⁴ But Palmó's was by no means small or minor. Originally built to house Italian opera on Chambers Street a block away from City Hall, it had failed in that enterprise. Shortly after the nude polka, the theatre was purchased by William Burton, and as Burton's Chambers Street Theatre it was for the next

¹⁶¹ Gilfoyle, 67, 110, 362-363 n. 39-41

¹⁶² Gilfoyle, 112. Gilfoyle cites George Foster, *New York in Slices by an Experienced Carver* (New York: William H. Graham, 1849), 101; George Templeton Strong, *Diary*, Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds. (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 2:410.

¹⁶³ Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness, Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁶⁴ Gilfoyle, 127.

sixteen years a prime house for light opera, burletta, and comedy.¹⁶⁵

The probable presence of prostitutes or courtesans amongst the “respectable” audience, along with the growth of model artist shows, were just two signs of a vast change in male culture, a change that became reflected on stage in almost all performance venues. As Gilfoyle has documented, the 1850s through 1870s were decades of tremendous growth in the “Sporting Life” culture—that sub-culture in which “women were perceived as objects and images to purchase, judged by their sexual talents, and measured in terms of monetary exchange and value.”¹⁶⁶ This cultural change was reflected on stage. In 1866, *The Black Crook* featured approximately 50 female dancers in what were for their time exceptionally skimpy costumes. The show ran at Niblo’s Garden, one of the elite theatres in New York, for sixteen months. The demon dance, in which women wore extremely brief pants over tights and a sleeveless bodice, was so popular that William Wheatley, the producer, published the schedule of production numbers so that Sporting Men could time to the minute their visit to the theatre to see their favorite dancers. As soon as *The Black Crook* closed, *The White Fawn* opened, utilizing much the same drawing card as its predecessor—a great many underdressed women.¹⁶⁷ And in 1868, Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes arrived at Wood’s Theatre, a respectable middle-class museum theatre, with their woman-produced, all-female burlesque company, the first of its kind. Their combination of cross-dressing with irreverent cultural commentary and intellectual wit caused an uproar, particularly when they re-opened at the still-elite Niblo’s Garden the following season. Robert C. Allen describes and analyzes the critical process by which Thompsonian burlesque was banished from the field of highbrow culture to that of the low other, and the effect

¹⁶⁵ Mary C. Henderson, *City and the Theatre, The*, 2nd ed. (New York: Backstage Books, 2004), 72-73.

¹⁶⁶ Gilfoyle, 92-160. For quote see p. 141.

¹⁶⁷ Gilfoyle, 128-129. See also Allen, 112-113; Odell 8:152-155, 283-284. *The Black Crook* was revived at Niblo’s in 1870-71, 1871-72 and 1873-74. It was revived again by the Kiralfy brothers at the Grand Opera House in 1874-75. See Odell vol. 9, 26-27, 154, 406, and 555.

this process had on burlesque as a popular art form and on the female performers who participated in it.¹⁶⁸ In addition, although the concert saloons of the Civil War years, with their “pretty waiter girls,” performing wait-staff and prostitutes, had been outlawed in 1862 and again in 1872, Gilfoyle has found plenty of evidence of their continuation “underground” through the 1890s, and their relationship to the business of prostitution.¹⁶⁹ Through the end of the century, female performers continued to contend with the common image of actress as quasi-prostitute, lying abed of a morning after a late night supper with male admirers. Mary H. Fiske, writing in her regular *Mirror* column as The Giddy Gusher in 1882, excoriated the mothers of three young female performers who actively encouraged or looked the other way when their daughters went out with admirers. She blamed these “Miserable Mothers” for their daughters’ fall from purity, and not incidentally, for the continued opprobrium in which the profession of actress was held.¹⁷⁰

In 1891, the husband of Fanny Rice fired several women in Miss Rice’s company,

because they went out to supper after the play, and did not go straight to bed. In explaining his extraordinary conduct Mr. Purdy has made use of certain comments of an ethical character which display him in the light of a severely exalted moralist. “No good woman,” says Mr. Purdy, “would go to a supper and drink wine or beer. It is indecent.”¹⁷¹

The *Mirror* article plainly is making fun of a man who feels his wife’s virtue in need of such protection, to the extent, indeed, of forbidding members of the cast of another company to attend

¹⁶⁸ Allen. Several “legitimate” or semi-legitimate theatre stars began with Lydia Thompson’s company: Rose Coghlan moved from Thompson’s company to Wallack’s stock company, then to the Empire Theatre Company, and then out on her own; Eliza Weathersby moved from Thompson to A.M. Palmer’s Union Square Theatre stock company, and eventually married Nat C. Goodwin, helping to develop his musical comedy company; Alice Atherton moved into what might be called “legitimate-vaudeville” or upper-class music hall. See the clippings files for these actresses in BRTC.

¹⁶⁹ Gilfoyle, 192-193, 225-239.

¹⁷⁰ [Mary H. Fiske], “On Miserable Mothers,” *NYDM*, 15 April 1882, 3. She did not, of course, actually name the actresses involved, though she gave enough information for those in the know to recognize them. This writer, unfortunately, still has not joined that group.

¹⁷¹ “Stage Morals,” *Brooklyn Daily Times*, 10 October 1891, clipping in Fanny Rice clippings file, BRTC.

Rice's performance because he disapproved of the morals of two of them!¹⁷² But the late night supper was so regularly blamed for the "fall" of young actresses that Fanny Davenport, by this time manager of her own company for many years, wrote in an article for publication in 1891 that "I wish here to cite a fact I am very proud of in all my career upon the stage some twenty years I have never been out to a supper after the Play!"¹⁷³ Although prostitutes had been removed from the business of theatre, therefore, women who chose to enter theatre as a profession after the Civil War moved into a much more highly eroticized field than theatre had been before the war. For women, part of choosing a theatre career after the war became choosing to defend the virtue and honor of female performers in general. Both a woman's background and her behavior came into play in this defense, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

"I was bent on being an actresses..."

Many women born in the mid- to late-nineteenth century were fairly straightforward regarding their choice to enter theatre. Mary Anderson is perhaps the best known actress of the period who clearly chose to make a career in theatre. Born in 1859, she was introduced to the theatre at the age of 12 by her stepfather, Dr. Griffin. At the age of 14, she saw Edwin Booth in a performance of Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu* and decided overnight (literally, she claims) to become an actress. Aided by her stepfather, who soon became her manager, she travelled to Cincinnati to see Charlotte Cushman perform, and auditioned for her. Cushman gave her a

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Fanny Lily Gypsy Davenport, *Woman's Work Upon the Stage*, 1891?, HTC. This is a manuscript of an article, apparently written in answer to a series of questions set by the editor of whatever publication had commissioned it. The published version, if indeed it was published, has not yet been located. The lack of punctuation is in the original.

recommendation to actor George Vandenhoff for further training, and two years later, Anderson made her stage debut.¹⁷⁴

Margaret Anglin, born the year Anderson first appeared on stage, left Toronto for New York and the Empire Dramatic School, a feeder school for Charles Frohman's Empire Theatre stock company. She debuted on stage in 1894.¹⁷⁵ Maggie Cline (b. 1857) and Trixie Friganza (b. 1871) both ran away from home to go into show business, as did Amy Busby (b. 1872), and Josie Hall (fl. 1889-90). Blanche Walsh was the daughter of Thomas P. Walsh, New York City politician and warden of The Tombs. Graduating at the age of 13 from Grammar School No. 50 in New York City, she was accepted at the Normal School to prepare for a teaching career, but according to a 1902 article in *Theatre* magazine, was forced to leave because she did not meet the minimum age of 14. "This offended me," Blanche wrote in this article, and she never went back. She prepared at home, she states in this article, and went on stage three years later at age 17. Another article, written just weeks before her 17th birthday in 1889 makes it clear she had already been on stage for more than a year—and incidentally makes no mention of the Normal School. An article written in 1893 also ignores the Normal School and states that she went to the Lyceum School of Acting, as opposed to simply preparing at home.¹⁷⁶ While all give interestingly different accounts of her training, the stories above all lead to the conclusion that for Walsh, whose father had influence and probably money, both of which would have made

¹⁷⁴ Raymond Sawyer, "Anderson, Mary," ed. Roberts Robinson, and Barranger (1989), 23; Mary Anderson de Navarro, *A Few Memories* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896), 28-40.

¹⁷⁵ Rita M. Plotnicki, "Anglin, Margaret," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 30.

¹⁷⁶ "Maggie Cline."; "Maggie Cline, Vaudeville Idol of the 90s, Dies."; "Former 'Champagne Girl' Trixie Friganza, 83, Dies," *Corpus Christi Times*, 28 February 1955, ; "Retired Actress Trixie Friganza Dies at 83," *Chronicle Telegram*, 28 February 1955; "Amy Busby," *Illustrated American*, 1895, clipping in Amy Busby clippings file, BRTC; Blanche Walsh, "Their Beginnings," *Theatre Magazine* 1905, 181-182; "Blanche Walsh," *Clipper*, 21 December 1889, 679; "Our Gallery of Players. Miss Blanche Walsh," *Illustrated American*, 4 February 1893, clipping in scrapbook, BRTC.

finding a husband fairly easy, an acting career was a choice. However, women born in the earlier part of the century tell stories of their entry into theatre that appear much less reliable.

Over the course of the century, 76 women in the database coming from non-theatrical families indicated that their entry into the business was a personal decision based on a wish for the career, representing 37% of those for whom some suggestion of a reason for entering the business could be found. Only five of these women, or 11%, were born before 1830. In an interview with the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in 1892, Mme. Elizabeth Ponisi (b. 1818, in England) stated:

There never was any other member of the family addicted to acting. There wasn't a theatre in the town, but strolling players performed at fairs in the vicinity from time to time. These fairs became the chief joy of my existence. . . . I was bent on being an actress, and on that account accepted an offer of marriage from Mr. James Ponisi, a professional actor.

She was 18 at the time. She had first been placed in the category of those who had married into the profession, but she herself states that she married Ponisi because she wanted an acting career. She chose her husband to help her towards her chosen career. This is perhaps the most open and honest statement found among her generation of career choosers.

Emma Waller's 1899 obituary states that she was "born in London" in 1819 "of wealthy parents, who spared no pains or expense in her early education." She was educated in Europe and

spent a number of years in travel and study, with the intention of going upon the grand opera stage. But for some unknown reason she abandoned this ambition and, upon reaching maturity, turned her attention to the drama. After some time spent in preparation, she began her career as an actress, with an English provincial company, in 1848.¹⁷⁷

Her career is presented as the choice of a well-off young woman of education and refinement.

In 1899 at the age of 78, Elizabeth Andrews gave an interview to the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in which she stated that she debuted as Juliet at the Garrick Theatre, London,

¹⁷⁷ "The Passing of Emma Waller," *NYDM*, 11 March 1899, 15.

having been coached in the part by ... Macready's stage-manager. That was my first appearance on any stage, and my sisters were cruel enough to speak of it as my "first appearance as a lady." Mr. Macready witnessed ... the performance, and when it was over he complimented me, ... and advised me to continue in dramatic work. With this recommendation I secured a position as first walking lady in the stock company at the Bristol Theatre, and there gradually worked up to better parts.¹⁷⁸

There is no mention here of any need to earn a living, and the presence of teasing sisters indicates a good-natured nuclear family that did not ostracize her. The information that she obtained coaching before she debuted in a starring role at a well-respected theatre also indicates a choice rather than a necessity, as well as an ability to pay for the coaching. Clearly, she chose to go to that particular theatre and put herself in the hands of Macready's stage manager (whose role might be considered directorial, today), and he acceded to her request. Her 1910 obituary states flatly that she went on stage "in opposition to her family's wishes."¹⁷⁹ This also indicates choice, rather than necessity.

An undated biography on Isabella Glyn, possibly cut from a theatre program, states that she was born in Edinburgh in 1823 and "educated in strictly Presbyterian principles." Her parents and family, therefore, were firmly against the stage. She went south to England and while there got involved with some amateurs working at the St. James Theatre. She then went to Paris and studied under M. Michelet of the Conservatoire. In 1846, she returned to England because her sister's health was poor, and then was introduced to and worked with Charles Kemble, beginning a long career as a tragedienne. Her entrance into the profession is presented as her choice, in contradiction to her upbringing and her parents' wishes, but according to this story, she was not ostracized from the family because of it.

¹⁷⁸ "At the Edwin Forrest Home: Four Favorites of Other Years," *NYDM*, 26 August 1899, 14.

¹⁷⁹ "Veteran Actress Dead. Elizabeth Andrews Passes Away at the Edwin Forrest Home," *NYDM*, 9 April 1910, 5.

The Re-Invention of Family Background

Most of these stories are full of holes which represent an attempt at re-invention later in the century, often, though not always, at the woman's death. In the greater number of cases, even the most conventional information is missing. Emma Waller's obituary writer points out that "for some unknown reason" she decided to become a theatre actress rather than attempt an opera or concert career, both of which, as Lawrence Levine has shown, had been designated as high culture by the end of the century, as opposed to many aspects of theatre.¹⁸⁰ No excuse is made about her voice giving out, as was the case for Charlotte Cushman and later in the century, Henrietta Crossman; and Waller's repertoire seems to have been entirely within the spoken drama. The mention of studying for opera on the European continent appears to be a late attempt to upgrade her background.¹⁸¹ There is no mention in Elizabeth Andrew's interview of what led her to Macready's stage manager in the first place. There is no mention by her of parental anti-theatrical prejudice (in the mid 1830s!)—no mention of parents at all, in fact. There is no statement in her interview or obituary that she had always wanted to go on stage, or had become stage-struck as a girl. Did she in fact need to go on stage in order to support those charmingly teasing sisters of hers? But if so, why not say so? It is only her obituary, written in 1910 and very dependent upon the interview of eleven years previous, that gives the information that she went on stage against her parents' wishes. Is that so? Or is it an assumption on the part of the obituary writer? Isabella Glyn's biography is also missing key connecting information: how, for instance, did she get the money to attend the Conservatoire? Did her parents relent? Why did she go to England from Scotland to begin with? The family backgrounds of these women from the early

¹⁸⁰ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*.

¹⁸¹ H.L. Kleinfield, "Cushman, Charlotte Saunders," in *Notable American Women, 1607-1950; a Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Edward T. James (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 422; "Henrietta Crossman," *Clipper*, 24 July 1886, 289; "The Passing of Emma Waller."

years of the century are carefully hidden, either by themselves or by their descendents. Their interviews and obituaries were written for an audience that expected a particular background for actresses, and particular behaviors from young women of that background that were very different from those expected when they embarked upon their careers.

Actresses who entered the business in the early part of the century were not the only women to obfuscate their origins. Numerous women from theatrical families chose to obscure or completely conceal their theatrical origins. In discussing her “Irish woman” character, Annie Mack Berlein (b. 1850), who immigrated from Ireland at the age of 13 and played the ongoing role of Mrs. Lochmuller in numerous Harrigan and Hart shows during the 1870s and 80s, stated in an undated interview that, “Of course I had no chance to meet the lower class in Dublin, where even servants were to a certain extent refined—they were trained as servants on the estate. I got many of my quaint Irish sayings from an old nurse.”¹⁸² In a 1914 interview, she said she came to the U.S. with her uncle, a surgeon on a ship sailing to America who thought a sea voyage would be good for her health. Upon arriving in New York,

I remembered that my father had gone to college in Ireland with John Brougham, who was then one of the famous actors in America. I don't know where or how I came by my desire to go on the stage. Certainly I didn't get it from my convent training.... Anyway, I looked up Mr. Brougham, and almost before I knew it I was a member of his company.¹⁸³

Both of these interviews attempt to paint the picture of a young woman from a family of some means – even with a country estate – who just “fell in” to a theatrical career without meaning or trying to. However, according to an obituary in the *Herald Tribune*, she was “the daughter of a

¹⁸² “Two Christmas Eves,” *Spirit*, 30 June 1883, clipping in Annie Mack Berlein clippings file, BRTC; “She Played With Booth,” 1908?, unidentified clipping in Annie Mack Berlein clipping file, BRTC.

¹⁸³ “Annie Mack Berlein Talks of the Old Days,” *NYT*, 27 December 1914, unidentified clipping in Annie Mack Berlein clipping file, BRTC.

band master and an actress.”¹⁸⁴ By the early twentieth century, she had decided to pretend to a middle class professional, non-theatrical background.

In 1889, the *New York Clipper* reports that Mrs. W.G. Jones, whose father was a bandmaster, came to the United States with her family “from the West Indies in her father’s pleasure yacht.”¹⁸⁵ This gives the impression of achievement of serious financial success and security, with its concomitant upper-middle-class status, on the part of her father the bandmaster.

Apparently they were on a family cruise and just happened to put in to port in Philadelphia. But in an unpublished autobiography handwritten in 1875, Mrs. Jones states that:

My father was Band Master of the 33rd Regiment.... The Colonel of the Regiment was a Tyrant. My Father sent in his resignation, which was not accepted. He (my Father) bought a Boat something over 5 Tons Burden, put Piano Music in the hold for ballast. He had a pocket compass, a soldier wanted to get to the U.S. Told my Father he could Navigate & Steer. So with a Barrel of provisions lash’d to the Mast, Crackers, dried Peas & Water in the little cabin, a small Furnace on Deck for cooking purposes, we set sail about 3. o clock one fine afternoon...

“Pleasure yacht,” indeed! Her father, William Wagstaffe, was escaping from the British military stationed in Bermuda, and taking his oldest son, by that time enlisted in the army, with the rest of the family. The first night out they survived a storm that washed overboard nearly all their provisions, including their furnace, and by the time they were picked up by a passing sailing vessel two weeks later, were literally almost dead. Arriving in Philadelphia with nothing, they were fortunate that Wagstaffe found a job at the Walnut Street Theatre leading the family band.¹⁸⁶ It is difficult to tell whether it was Mrs. Jones herself, or the reporter from the *Clipper*,

¹⁸⁴ "Annie Berlein is Dead; Acted Opposite Booth," *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 July 1935, obituary in Annie Mack Berlein clipping file, BRTC.

¹⁸⁵ "Mrs. W.G. Jones," *Clipper*, 26 January 1889, 729.

¹⁸⁶ Mrs. W.G. (Julia Wagstaffe) Jones, *Sketch of the Life of Mrs. W.G. Jones, 1875*, NYPL-MASC, Miscellaneous Subjects. There are two versions of this autobiography in a writing book with “Sketch of life of Mrs. W. G. Jones” written on the cover in pencil. One is written in pencil with numerous cross-outs and corrections, all in the same hand as the diary cited in Chapter One. The other is written in ink in an extremely clear hand, obviously a copyist’s, and is dated Boonville, August, 1875. The versions are not exactly the same. The information about her

who recast the boat into a “pleasure yacht.” But there does seem to have been an imperative at work by 1889 to make Mrs. Jones’s background appear more financially and socially stable than it actually was.

Mrs. Barney Williams (b. 1826) gave this story of her entry into the theatre:

Well to begin with, let me tell you about my father. He was a non-professional, a business man here in New York. The theatre was a fad with him. He had the wildest enthusiasm for it. He bought all the plays he could get hold of and, in the evening, he would make me read them to him. In some way or another, he took it into his head that I had strong dramatic genius.... So he took me to Mr. Thomas Hamelin [Hamblin?], proprietor of the Chatham Theatre, afterwards the National. Mr. Hamelin was a warm personal friend of my father's. He told my father that he'd take me on, but I had to start at the bottom, like everybody else.¹⁸⁷

She began as a ballet and utility girl, she says, and worked her way up. At the time of this interview, Mrs. Williams was about 70 years old. The clipping is undated, but as she was born in 1826, the interview was probably in 1896. According to Mrs. Williams, she was the favorite, if not only, daughter of an educated or self-educated middle-class New York businessman who was a lover of theatre, and who dotingly pushed her into the arms of his personal friend, perhaps the most important theatre manager of the era, Thomas Hamblin. But Hamblin was the manager of the Bowery Theatre, not the Chatham. Is Mrs. Williams simply confused?

No. Mrs. Barney Williams is reinventing herself to fit turn-of-the-century ideas – at least within the profession – of what the background of an actress should be. As it turns out, Mrs. Barney Williams, far from being the favorite or only daughter of a middle class businessman, was the oldest of three sisters to go on stage, all children of one Samuel Pray, who worked backstage at a number of New York theatres, the Bowery and the Chatham both probably among them, and was killed in a backstage accident when Maria, later Mrs. Williams, was 18. She had

brother is included in the copyist's version, as is a lengthy story of her mother's death. Neither appears in the pencil version.

¹⁸⁷ "A Chat with Mrs. Barney Williams," *NYDM*, [1896], clipping in Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams clippings file, BRTC.

begun her career four years earlier. Her sister Malvina, Mrs. Billy Florence, is the subject of an entry in *Notable Women in American Theatre*, which is where this information was found.¹⁸⁸

The Middle-Class Influx and Theatre Culture

The women whose stories have been discussed above worked for the most part, although not entirely, in “legitimate” theatre from the late 1870s through the 1890s – Wallack’s, Daly’s, Palmer’s, in New York City, or touring with stars such as Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett and others. But earlier in their careers, they had appeared in the usual conglomeration of pieces described by Lawrence Levine as making up an evening of theatre in stock companies.¹⁸⁹ It seems clear that by the 1890s, women from traditional theatre backgrounds and women who entered the theatre from less than upper-middle-class families earlier in the century felt considerable pressure to re-invent their personal backgrounds. Lawrence Levine has described the sacralization of the arts in America during the last decades of the nineteenth century, which placed certain types of performance at the top of a cultural hierarchy—Shakespearean acting, Wagnerian music, Greco-Roman sculpture—while others were considered lower on the ladder of cultural hierarchy. He ascribes this impulse to “a quest for cultural authority” or a quest for order.¹⁹⁰ Within the field of theatrical production (speaking now in Bourdieu’s sense, as I understand it), the hierarchalization of the theatrical product accompanied an invasion of the field of practice by members of a dominated fraction of the dominant class in the field of power—the bourgeois and professional classes. Bourdieu notes the “influx, in the 1850s, of a large number of writers living with precarious means on the lower edges” of the field of cultural production in Paris. This influx of a new type of writer then redefined what he calls “the post” of

¹⁸⁸ Daniel Barrett, "Florence, Malvina Theresa Pray," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 299.

¹⁸⁹ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 21-35.

¹⁹⁰ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 211 and 206.

writer. The definition of “writer” became one of a starving or “Bohemian” artist in a community of other artists who met each other in *cafés*,¹⁹¹ rather than one of intellectual poets vying for aristocratic patronage in *salons*. Similarly, with the influx into the theatrical field of a sizable number of women from professional and business-class backgrounds starting in the late 1870s, the ideal or acceptable background for female performers, particularly for those who had been successful at the higher end of what was becoming an increasingly hierarchical scale of cultural production, changed as well. This influx or invasion, documented in Chapter One, fundamentally changed the way in which female performers presented themselves to the public once they began to receive attention from the representatives of the dominant class. In addition, it often changed the way in which they attempted to call attention to themselves if they had not yet received this attention. These changes in self-presentation had professional and financial implications, because receiving attention from the theatrical press—the representatives of the dominant class—affected both their personal symbolic capital and their cultural capital. In other words, it affected their chances of success.

It is notable that most of these stories, both of re-invention and of apparent choice, were given to the press at the end of the nineteenth century or even beyond, many of them to the *New York Dramatic Mirror*. I suggest that these stories bear witness to a real shift in the idea of what an actress was supposed to be, or rather, who was supposed to be an actress, during the latter third of the nineteenth century. This process was helped along by the founding of the *Dramatic Mirror*. As Benjamin McArthur notes, the *Mirror* was founded in 1879 in order to upgrade the perception and presentation of the theatrical profession, or in Bourdieuvian terms, the “field,” from that of an entertainment for Sporting Men, along with poker, boxing, the circus (and, not

¹⁹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” in *The Field of Cultural Production, Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 37-39, 62.

incidentally although never mentioned, brothels), to one for those who could claim some cultural capital and respectability. The *Mirror* was very soon purchased for Harrison Grey Fiske, scion of “an old and wealthy Massachusetts family,” by his father, according to McArthur.¹⁹² At the very moment young women from professional, upper-middle-class, and even wealthy backgrounds were entering the field, a “trade” paper was founded that reflected the standards of behavior and taste of the class from which the new entrants came and which they intended to serve. Further, the paper was controlled by a representative of that class, rather than a representative of the profession upon which it reported. One might be excused for thinking there was a concerted invasion of the field from the dominant class; and in a sense, there was. With the rise in status of symbols of cultural capital, Shakespeare and operatic music particularly, as discussed by Levine, and the post-war, post-Panic need for young women (and undoubtedly young men) of professional, business, and formerly wealthy backgrounds to earn their livings, “legitimate” theatre and light opera, now more strictly divided from the “lower” theatrical forms of variety and burlesque, may have opened the door for many from these classes to earn a living without completely de-classing themselves. In addition, for those to whom this was important, it appeared to offer a ladder to higher social status, if one could fashion and deliver an appropriate story.

I believe Mrs. Williams was trying to fashion that story. She excuses her lowly beginnings as a ballet girl as paternal care of a type expected from professional and business-class fathers, and covers her beginnings in the rough and tumble of blood-and-thunder melodrama at the Bowery Theatre by placing Hamblin in the much more acceptable though short-lived Chatham Theatre, which according to Mary Henderson, had a brief period of success

¹⁹² McArthur, 89.

as A.M. Purdy's National Theatre.¹⁹³ By the end of the century, when those who had lived and worked in early nineteenth century New York theatre were few and far between, this National Theatre could easily be confused with another National Theatre a few years later which was under the management of none other than James W. Wallack,¹⁹⁴ whose later theatre at Thirteenth Street became the home of dramas of British authors Tom Taylor and "cup and saucer" dramatist Tom Robertson. In other words, Maria Pray Williams was trying to intimate that she had always been a performer of the highest status, from a high-status background, even during a period when such theatrical distinctions were minimal within the United States. And Mrs. Barney Williams was not the only one. Her re-invention of her beginnings is similar to the story given out by Lillie Glover, who in 1901 gave an interview to the *Mirror* in an attempt to re-enter the business. In this interview Glover states that her father, a businessman with an interest in but no connection to theatre, was an "old and intimate friend" of Edwin Forrest's. When she was fourteen, Forrest asked her father to allow her to accompany him on tour as his leading lady:

Mr. Forrest gave me a brief, but very careful, preliminary training, and in 1867, when I was but fourteen, I made my debut in his support as Virginia in the tragedy of *Virginus*. That night on the stage I wore a long skirt for the first time in my life, so the occasion was of twofold importance to my girlish mind.

She traveled with Forrest for three years "to nearly all of the important cities where stock companies were established."¹⁹⁵

This story is very difficult to believe. It is highly unlikely that any middle-class businessman father of the mid-nineteenth century would allow his daughter, not yet considered to be out of childhood, as evidenced by the short skirts, to go on tour with a male star, apparently unchaperoned, at a period well before the influx of middle-class women into the business. On the

¹⁹³ Henderson, 60.

¹⁹⁴ Henderson, 66.

¹⁹⁵ "A Talk With Lillie Glover," *NYDM*, 1 July 1901, clipping in Lillie Glover clippings file, BRTC.

other hand, a father who had been an actor, a theatre manager, a prompter, a props man or machinist, or other theatrical person might well allow and even encourage this. Such a man would be aware that the theatre was not the sink of sin many still considered it; and would also know or could find out whether Forrest could be trusted with young women. But by the time she was trying to re-enter the business, Miss Glover's possible theatrical antecedents (and possibly quite low antecedents, if Mrs. Williams' background and re-invention are any guide) no longer fit the image of an actress who had played Virginia, Desdemona, and other classical heroines.

The Middle-Class Influx and Its Effect on Theatrical Natives

The perceived need to create a "professional" or upper-middle-class background extended to many of those whose theatrical antecedents could not be denied. When Marguerite Fish (b. 1868) debuted at the Thalia (once the Bowery) in German-language drama in 1886, with a planned English-language tour thereafter, the fact that she had once been known as "Baby Benson," a child prodigy on the variety, vaudeville, and English music hall stages, was emphasized. This was likely because her adult name was unfamiliar to New York audiences, and without name familiarity, there would be little particular reason for English-speaking audiences to take an interest. But the publicity surrounding her transformation tries very hard to make it seem that her parents, orchestra leader James Fish and dancing soubrette Jenny Benson, took her out of that milieu at an early age, and carefully nurtured the child prodigy, providing her with all the comforts of an upper-class home and education. The program biography for her Thalia debut first details her entrée on the stage and her early successes. It then states that after an engagement at the Adelphi, London, she

accompanied her parents to South Africa, under the management of Mr. N. Behrens, and, remaining there during eighteen months, accumulated a fortune of over one hundred thousand dollars....Having now accumulated a competency, her parents returned to ...

America, to establish a home and to educate their child. The little one was now nine years of age and did not know the alphabet.

This last sentence rather works against the objective of making her background appear middle-class. A list of private girls schools then follows, to make up for the previous lack of schooling, including “Miss Fielding’s School, Westminster Street, Providence, one of the best academies in the state,” “the private school of Mrs. M.J. Gould” outside of Boston, and musical studies “under the tutelage of Prof. Carlisle Petersilyea, of the Petersilyea Musical Academy.” Here she continued as a child phenomenon: “Both in theory and practice the little girl became an exceedingly skillful musician—her execution upon the piano being considered most remarkable for one so young.” Clearly the attempt is to raise her status from the vaudeville circuit to upper-middle class gentility and culture, through the medium of attendance at upper-middle class private girls schools, without allowing the reader to lose sight of the fact that she had been and remained a prodigy. This is a difficult task. “During the vacation between the first and second year of her attendance,” the program continues, “she was prevailed upon by Mr. Braham, musical director at the Boston Museum, to accept the part of Lady Angela in *Patience* with Braham and Scanlan's Miniature Ideal Opera Company.”¹⁹⁶ For the first time, a verifiable high-status entertainment form is mentioned in connection with Miss Fish. It is as though her “gap” years at school had distilled the essence of her genius for higher class entertainments, leaving the dross of variety and music hall behind with her childhood. The mention of the Boston Museum, the premier stock company of Boston, bastion of propriety, bolsters this attempt (although the mention of the Miniature Ideal Opera Company might be problematic, since the New York City performance was shut down by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1882).¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ *Marguerite Fish, Comedienne*, (New York, 1886).

¹⁹⁷ “Patience,” *Sunday Times*, no. 13 August, 1882, 7, Savoy Opera Reviews.

Then, in case the reader might still think that hers was just another story of a performer unable to stay off the stage, the ladylike upbringing of this once vaudevillian urchin is reinforced by reference to redemptive womanhood. In response to Mr. Braham's invitation, "She hesitated at first, preferring a summer of recreation, but remembering that Mr. Braham was a colleague and an intimate friend of her father, she finally accepted the engagement." She did Mr. Braham the favor of performing in his show because of his relationship with her father, not in any way for the salary she must have received. After another season of schooling she was sent to the Chauncey Hall School, Boyleston Street, Boston, "where she remained one year and finished her education, which consisted of grammar, history, mathematics, the classics in English, painting in oil and music." Again, the reader is told that Miss Fish is in possession of all the accomplishments of an educated young lady. She and her mother then returned to Europe "on a pleasure trip" in the summer of 1884. In January 1885, they apparently ran out of money and Marguerite quickly had to learn German in order to begin working for her living in Berlin. The program biography, however, presents her return to the stage almost as the whim of a schoolgirl: "While there, Marguerite was possessed of a desire to again appear upon the stage.... [S]he did not understand a word of German, and so it would seem to have been an easy matter to dissuade her from her purpose. She was, however, made of sterner stuff, and could not be diverted from her resolution by persuasion."¹⁹⁸ The incredible detail with which her education is described, and the image presented of a young girl vacillating between recreation and bestowing a favor upon a father's friend, of a young woman just suddenly getting the urge to perform again, is an attempt to make the reader think of Miss Fish, not as the low vaudeville performer she had been, but as a highly cultured young woman, with all the charming whims of a young and carefree bourgeoisie, returning to the country of her birth.

¹⁹⁸ *Marguerite Fish, Comedienne.*

The Actress and the Sacralization of Theatre

Kim Marra has discussed Maude Adams' campaign, under the direction of Charles Frohman, to "bring out her northeastern gentility" rather than her problematic Mormon background and childhood performing, as part of "queer star making" and Frohman's assimilationist empire building.¹⁹⁹ But it was also part of an ongoing campaign by Frohman, Augustin Daly, and Harrison Grey Fiske, among others, to place "legitimate" drama firmly in the arena of high culture. And for this campaign to be successful, performers, and particularly women, had to behave according to the precepts of the domestic ideal and come from families that met those standards. Viola Allen (b. 1867), leading lady of the Empire Theatre Company and later champion and producer of well-received productions of *Twelfth Night*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*, was known to come from a theatrical family, but in the few interviews she gave regarding her background, and in the voluminous press materials prompted by her starring roles in romantic (and what can only be called Christian) melodrama, as well as in Shakespeare, she allowed only her father to have any connection with the theatre at all. In 1906 she stated that

Educated in a school in a suburb of Boston, a church school in Toronto, and finally 'finished' at a boarding school in New York, I knew almost nothing about the drama. Although my father was an actor, he was the only one of his family in the profession. He was of an old New England family made up principally of judges and soldiers. My mother was English and she brought my brothers and sister and myself up more simply than most children in American homes. In consequence, I seldom heard the theatre mentioned in the household.²⁰⁰

According to Miss Allen, her acquaintance with Shakespeare was due to her education, including courses in rhetoric and English literature. "Father and I read a great deal of Shakespeare as part of my training in rhetoric and English literature," she says, but according to this story, he never discussed it with her in terms of theatre. Her credentials as a "lady,"—Boston schooling, church

¹⁹⁹Marra, 91.

²⁰⁰Viola Allen, "My Beginnings," *The Theater*, January 1906, 93-94.

school, finishing school, judges and soldiers on her father's side and an English mother—are presented with that tact that proves her upbringing, gentility, and fitness for the role of star in what had become the highbrow end of the theatrical business. The fact that she had appeared on stage as a child, or that her mother had been an actress herself was suppressed.²⁰¹ People in the business knew it, but Allen herself never alluded to it.

Performers who did not come from theatrical backgrounds also found themselves or their agents re-inventing their backgrounds to fit this image when they decided to enter the “legitimate” end of the theatrical business. In February of 1886, the *New York Clipper* reported Louise Thorndyke's surprise marriage to Dion Boucicault in Australia. She was said to be the daughter of a theatrical boardinghouse keeper and a hotel clerk. “It is related of her,” says the *Clipper*,

that she made her debut on the stage in 1880 in a peculiar way. She had accompanied a friend--a well-known actress--to Niblo's Garden, where the actress was to play in the opening of an *Our Boarding-house* engagement. When the time came to ring up, it was found that no young girl had been engaged to play the part of the Fourteenth Boarder at the table. Miss Thorndyke was pressed into service, and thus commenced her career.²⁰²

As the daughter of a boarding-house keeper, she certainly would have been a “natural” for the part. However, ten years later, Mrs. Boucicault stated simply that

I was living here in New York with my mother when the invincible desire to go on the stage seized me. I was ambitious and sanguine like all stage-struck girls. But I had some few grains of common sense, and I made up my mind to stand or fall by the first verdict....So when Tom Maguire, the Californian manager, who was a friend of our family, offered to give me a chance in the Baldwin stock company, I lost no time in accepting.²⁰³

Mrs. Boucicault had no control over the way in which she and her background were presented to New York show business in 1886. But when she finally did gain control, she erased the

²⁰¹ F.J. Wilstach, "Miss Allen's Career," n.d., typescript of publicity release, in scrapbook, BRTC.

²⁰² "Louise Thorndyke," *Clipper*, 27 February 1886, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

²⁰³ "A Clever Comedienne," *NYDM*, 4 July 1896, clipping in Louise Thorndyke Boucicault clippings file,

boardinghouse and the apparently happenstance career and replaced them with a mother at home and the “invincible desire” of the stage-struck middle-class girl to go upon the stage. The question of how Tom Maguire happened to be a family friend is not addressed in Mrs. Boucicault’s 1896 story of her beginnings.

Clearly, the attempt to re-invent family background and present themselves as coming from comfortable middle- or even upper-class backgrounds was not terribly successful for most of these women. If a reader from the early twenty-first century can poke holes in these stories, how much more transparent must they have been during the period they were being told? But as Karen Halttunen has pointed out, by the 1840s, the division between parlor behavior and the necessary “back regions” of middle- and upper-class homes was accepted. In the parlor and at the dinner party, everything happened “as if by magic.” In the back regions—backstage, in theatre parlance—there were dressing rooms for guests to prepare their entrances, and hard-working servants who were the all-important supporting characters and stagehands for the hostess’s performance.²⁰⁴ “The most important law of polite social geography was that no one shatter the magic of the genteel performance by acknowledging the existence of the back regions that alone made the performance possible,” notes Halttunen. If members of the press and the reading public wanted to maintain their own membership in bourgeois society, it was necessary for them to accept the stories of performers’ family backgrounds at face value, just as they hoped others would accept any stories they told. And by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the popularity of parlor theatricals continuing to grow, the American middle classes had begun to celebrate the performative aspects of the role of the “genteel” and the theatricality of the rules of society that controlled their lives. Halttunen details the fascination with meta-theatrical themes

²⁰⁴ Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women, A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 106-107.

revealed in parlor sketches – plays within plays, backstage scenes, direct address by characters to the audience commenting on the performances of which the characters were a part, etc. “The message of parlor theatricals was simply this,” says Halttunen: “middle-class social life was itself a charade,” a performance.²⁰⁵ Therefore, the performance of gentility in the press by women already known to be professional performers may have been more acceptable than exceptional, as long as their public behavior when off the stage conformed to the rules of behavior their female audience members followed.

Conclusion

The reasons women gave for entering the theatrical profession changed noticeably over the century, from redemption of others, to choice of a career. Part of the reason for this change may be due to changes in women’s sense of independence and personal responsibility for their own lives, occasioned by changes in family economics after the Civil War and the Panic of 1873. Another reason may be the change in the relationship of theatre to prostitution. At the beginning of the century, prostitutes had used theatres as their business office, meeting with clients and setting up assignations with them, and theatres had welcomed their business. This began to change in the decade before the Civil War, and by the end of the War, most of this type of business appears to have become confined to Concert Saloons, dance halls, and underground drinking and performing establishments. It was no longer a part of the life of theatres that valued the patronage of middle class audiences. Actresses in first class, and even in popularly priced theatres, therefore, could no longer be said to be supporting the business of prostitution, and did not have to advance a redemptive reason for entering the business.

²⁰⁵ Halttunen, 182-185. Quote on 185

Theatres catering to elite and upper-middle class audiences also made it easier for women from those backgrounds to enter theatre as a profession without completely losing caste. Middle- and upper-class audiences wanted to see characters on stage who reflected their own attitudes and behaviors, and women from the business, professional, and elite classes were most believable in those roles. Women from theatrical families, particularly those who worked or wanted to work at the higher end of the status scale, began to feel pressure to create backstories reflecting the types of families the new entrants came from. The fact that these stories are often so obviously invented testifies both to the difficulty of creating such stories, and to the perceived necessity for them. However, the dissemination of these stories indicate that audiences generally were accepting of such fictions in a way we might find impossible today. Because of the tacitly understood acceptance of the performative nature of much of middle-class social intercourse, and in the absence of “investigative journalism,” most reinventions of background were accepted at face value.

The perceived need to upgrade one’s family background was one major way in which the circling ideas of womanhood affected the manner in which female performers presented themselves to the public. But expectations about female behavior, particularly in relation to men, affected women’s careers and earnings more directly than perceptions about their background.

CHAPTER THREE

“ON A PERFECT EQUALITY WITH MAN”?

THEATRICAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

In May of 1893 during the Columbian Exposition, Helena Modjeska, Georgia Cayvan, Clara Morris, and Julia Marlowe addressed the World’s Congress of Representative Women on the subject of “woman and the drama.” In her speech on the “emotional” actress, Morris took time out to affirm the belief, often stated even today, that “hundreds of years ago, when every other profession was locked against her, and most of them had a man on guard outside that she might not learn too much about the size and shape of the keyhole,”²⁰⁶ theatre had welcomed women and paid them equally for their work. Georgia Cayvan, too, reiterated this belief when she said that theatre was

the pioneer in granting to women the privileges which in other intellectual callings they are still striving to compass; the first to rise above the narrowness that makes sex a barrier to success, and to recompense woman’s talent and ability with the same measure of fame and fortune commanded by men.²⁰⁷

Even Modjeska hinted at this when she said that “whoever is familiar with the history of the theater will acknowledge with me that at every new phase of development, at every new step of progress, actresses have marked their way as prominently as actors.”²⁰⁸ These women were of course talking about English-speaking theatre since women had been allowed upon the stage, although Modjeska actually began with Hrotsvitha. Yet even within their own century, the story of equal treatment was not true. In a number of ways, even or possibly particularly those female performers at the top of their profession appear to have been constrained by the cultural

²⁰⁶ Clara Morris, "Woman in the Emotional Drama," in *The World's Congress of Representative Women*, ed. May Wright Sewall (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), 177-178, <http://www.archive.org/details/worldscongressof00worluoft>.

²⁰⁷ Cayvan, 182.

²⁰⁸ Helena Modjeska, "Woman and the Stage," in *The World's Congress of Representative Women*, ed. May Wright Sewall (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), 172, <http://www.archive.org/details/worldscongressof00worluoft>.

expectations of female motivation and behavior, as well as the idea of the “nature” of woman. This chapter will examine how women negotiated their relationships with managers, and how stories about marriage and divorce within the profession manifested broader cultural fears about women’s growing independence after the Civil War.

Expectations of Female Service and Subsistence

The Subservient Female in Theatre

Many female performers had problems with managers during the last thirty years of the century regarding control of their own careers. Managers often proceeded as if they believed that women would not make a fuss if they were taken advantage of – indeed, might not even notice they were being taken advantage of. Numerous letters to agents and managers show that being a successful performer, then as now, required independence, entrepreneurship, and bargaining skills. Yet managers seemed to expect that any and all wartime experiences these women might have had or have heard of, all their independent work experience, any models for female behavior that did not include submissiveness to men, would be forgotten as quickly as the national press had forgotten the autobiographies of Civil War nurses that were published immediately after the war.²⁰⁹ Managers such as Augustin Daly, the Frohman brothers, and the Frohman’s bosses, the Mallory brothers, expected obedience from the women in their companies. But obedience is antithetical to the newer ideas of women then circulating as adults individually responsible to society and for themselves. In *Strange Duets*, Kim Marra brings to light two separate but related aspects of Augustin Daly’s management which she interprets as

²⁰⁹ At least five war autobiographies were published between 1865 and 1869, plus three works by men about women's work in the war. Only one such book was published in the 1870s. Mary Livermore published *My Story of the War* in 1887. Three years later, Congress decided to award pensions to the 21,208 Union women who had been paid to work during the war. See Jane E. Schultz, *Women at the Front, Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 20. But between 1869 and 1887, women's stories of the war virtually disappeared from the public press.

specific to himself and his issues with control of women. As will be demonstrated below, however, Daly's behavior was in many ways representative of issues brought to the fore by the changes in women's behavior during and after the Civil War.

Augustin Daly's dictatorial style and rigid rules fell more harshly upon the women than the men in his company. According to Marra, Daly saw the actresses in his company as a species of natural resource which he alone could discover, cultivate, and shape. Any attempt to leave his company, Marra says, he interpreted as "escape" from his rightful possession and control.²¹⁰ Marra brings to light the fact that Daly's earliest surviving printed contracts, which include a clause that prevents the performer from performing for other managers without his express permission, used the feminine pronoun as the default, indicating his concern with maintaining his rights to the work, personalities, and bodies of the female members of his company.²¹¹ Leading into her discussion of actress as natural resource for Daly, Marra compares Daly's autocratic managerial style with the "household model of business organization" in which the business owner, like the male head of household, is the king of the castle. In this scenario, his male employees are treated like sons or brothers, with a potential for achieving equality with him, while any female employees—and in the theatre of course there are many—are treated like wives or daughters, with no such potential.²¹² Since in domestic ideology the ideal wife was expected to be obedient or submissive to her husband, and the daughter if anything more so, women in these positions in business settings were expected and assumed to be subservient by nature.

Although Georgia Cayvan and Clara Morris extolled the theatrical profession as the one that first treated women as equals, it is clear from letters and news clippings that within the

²¹⁰ Marra, 32-42.

²¹¹ Marra, 42.

²¹² Marra, 32.

profession, women regularly struggled for personal and professional dignity during the decades after the Civil War.

The story of Mrs. Thomas Barry illustrates the feedback loop of the circulating ideas about women and submissiveness, and the effect it could have on female performers. Clara Biddles was born into a family of performers that was brought to the United States by Thomas Barry, manager of the Boston Theatre. About two years after her arrival in Boston, at the age of sixteen, Clara married her manager and retired to domesticity. Her return to the stage in 1864, when Barry's health and then the theatre failed, was usually presented as the act of a redemptive woman. According to a story in the *Boston Herald* in 1878, she "would not sit with folded hands to let the burden fall upon him alone, and bravely came forth from her retirement once more to assume the arduous duties of the profession."²¹³ Neither her reason for re-entering the profession nor her husband's position, however, protected her from being taken advantage of at the first theatre she went to. She was hired as a "walking lady"²¹⁴ at Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati, a long way from Boston, and at the age of twenty-two, for the first time in her life found herself performing outside the protection of her family circle. The leading lady became ill, and Mrs. Barry was asked to take over her roles until a new leading lady could be found. This, the following story states, she did for four months before asking about her position:

Wondering a little at the delay in securing anyone for the position, she one day asked the manager when he expected to get a new "leading lady."

"I have her already," was the reply.

"But when does she come?"

"She is here now."

"But when does she commence to play?"

²¹³ "Mrs. Thomas Barry," *Boston Herald*, 25 August 1878, unidentified clipping in Personalities clippings file, HTC.

²¹⁴ A "walking lady" was the female counterpart to the "walking gentleman." Walking gentlemen are described by Clara Morris as characters who "stood about and pretended a deep interest in other people's affairs [or] ... are talked about continually." "Walking" characters may figure importantly in the plot, but the roles do not require great emotional intensity, comic, or character ability, just the ability to speak well, and to walk and stand gracefully on stage, which is harder than it looks. See Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 39.

“She is playing every night.”

“What do you mean?” said the puzzled woman; then seeing an amused smile in the manager's face, she exclaimed: “You can't mean me? Why I couldn't play leading parts.”

“What have you been doing for the past four months?” was the unanswerable reply.

“I never had thought of it before,” she says in relating the incident, “and I was actually frightened for a few minutes at my own temerity. Had I realized the position I should never have gone through as I did; but having been placed in the position without being aware of it, I had filled it acceptably, and there was nothing to do but go on.”²¹⁵

It would appear that Mrs. Barry was unaware that she was filling the position of leading lady, so it is highly unlikely that she was receiving the leading lady's salary; nor does she state that she was paid retroactively. It seems this manager used her relative youth and inexperience in negotiating for herself, her unprotected position with a sick husband halfway across the continent, and her apparent conditioning to the domestic ideal of young lady that she should submit herself to the father figure and not push herself forward, to get four months of leading lady work at walking lady prices. It is difficult to imagine a walking gentleman who took over the leading roles doing so without negotiating for a rise in salary almost immediately. There is no indication in the article that Mrs. Barry recognized, ten or more years later, that she had indeed been taken advantage of; rather the opposite. The episode is presented as a friendly trick on her that was all for her own good, since otherwise she would have been much too timid to think of aspiring to such a position. According to this story, like Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* at the end of the century, Mrs. Barry's career just sort of happened to her. She neither planned nor controlled her career.

Although it is a fact that Mrs. Barry did take over the leading lady roles in this manner, it is questionable whether she was quite so naïve as this story presents her, although it is certainly possible. It is also possible that the interviewer/author of the article took the liberty of reconstructing Mrs. Barry's tale to present her in conformity with the submissive part of the

²¹⁵ “Mrs. Thomas Barry, The Boston Theatre's Leading Lady,” n.d., unidentified clipping in *Personalities-Barry, Mrs. Thomas*, HTC.

domestic ideal. Or Mrs. Barry herself may have been reconstructing her story, much as Mrs. Florence would later, to make herself appear more ladylike than would a woman who was able to negotiate and bargain on her own behalf.²¹⁶ To readers who deplored the new independence of women, Mrs. Barry's submission probably seemed admirable.

But whether the story is true as told, or a re-invention, the publication of this interview during the last quarter of the century as women were beginning to plan and attempt to control their lives continues a retrograde feedback loop. Young female readers are taught—by a woman—that they should expect to be taken advantage of, and should accept this type of treatment for their own good, even in a profession in which men and women were supposedly treated as equals. And male readers are encouraged, with a sly wink, to continue to treat women in this fashion.

Daly's notorious treatment of Clara Morris and her reaction to it may be taken as another example of a manager expecting subservient behavior, and an actress delivering it, thereby encouraging him to even greater misuse of her. According to Morris, Daly hired her as an unknown in New York in the fall of 1870 at the rate of \$35 a week, promising to double her salary if she made a good impression.²¹⁷ In her very first appearance, as Anne Sylvester in *Man and Wife*, she astounded Daly, the audience, and critics alike, and immediately became a star.²¹⁸ Trusting him to live up to his promise, she did not ask Daly about her raise, although a fellow (male) cast member urged her to do so. Daly did not give it to her, and she found herself unable to confront him about it until he demanded she sign a five-year contract with a verbal promise to give her the previously promised raise when she had done so. Morris refused. She was grateful,

²¹⁶ Another possibility is that the manager sent her wages back to Mr. Barry in Boston, who agreed not to let Clara know her true position unless she asked. Such a possibility is too horrible to contemplate, so it is not mentioned here.

²¹⁷ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 257, 329.

²¹⁸ Lucien L. Agosta, "Morris, Clara," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 670.

she said, for the chance he had given her and because of that, promised never to tell anyone of how badly he had treated her! But she refused to sign a contract for more than one season and actually threatened to leave the company, a threat she did not carry through at that time. Not too much later, Daly saw a letter from Wallack's theatre in her mailbox and contrived to divert her into his office before she could get to it. There, he offered her the coveted one-season contract at a still negligible \$55 (considering her success and popularity), with a verbal agreement that he would provide "assistance in the matter of wardrobe." He also extracted a promise from her that she would tell no one of the special terms of the contract, since everyone else's contract ran for a three-season minimum. Then pleading pressing business, he sweetened the deal by offering a five-dollar raise for the rest of her first season, rushed her into signing, and rushed her out of the office. In her mailbox she found the letter from Lester Wallack, with a better offer.²¹⁹ In writing of this incident nearly thirty years later, Morris explains her inability to speak up for herself as due to the repression of her upbringing. As the child of a domestic servant, she had spent years sitting silently on a stool in a corner of the kitchen trying not to attract attention.²²⁰ But she prefaces the incident of the contract with stories of her growing friendship with Daly, her ability to make him laugh during rehearsals, to keep secrets about his plans for her that he clearly thought other members of the company would not have been able to do:

And so it came about that Mr. Daly...confided many, many plans and dreams, likes and dislikes, hates and loves to me. We quarreled spitefully over politics, fought furiously over religion, wickedly bowed down and worshipped before odds and ends of lovely carvings or precious *cloisonné*,... And it is a comfort to know that in one respect at least I proved satisfactory during the friendship that lasted as long as I remained in the theatre, since I never, even by chance, betrayed his confidence.²²¹

²¹⁹ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 329-332.

²²⁰ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 5.

²²¹ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 323.

She felt she had given him her work, friendship, and trustworthiness and had expected he would return the favor. But interpreted in terms of domestic ideology, she had offered her obedience and submission, rather like a good daughter. Like many other men of the period, Daly did not recognize Morris's contributions as such. Whatever she did was due him as father, husband, male head of the family, head of the business.

Some may question whether in her description of her relationship with Daly, Morris was tiptoeing around a romantic dalliance. After all, how many men "confide" "plans and dreams, likes and dislikes, hates and loves" to a woman with whom they are not romantically involved? Daly was a mere nine years older than Morris, and she was only twenty-three at the time. Such a relationship was certainly possible. Barbara Wallace Grossman, however, has looked closely at Morris's relationship with Daly as related in both her autobiographical writing and her fiction, and has concluded that Morris "never suggests that Daly pressured her into a sexual relationship. Although they disagreed publicly and privately over many issues, sex does not seem to have been one of them."²²² Morris's journals for 1870 and 1871, the years under question, are unfortunately missing, so it is not possible to compare how she wrote about Daly during her first two seasons with how she had written about a lover in Cleveland²²³ or about Frederick C. Harriott, whom she married in 1874. But correspondence between Augustin Daly and his brother Joseph about Morris give no indication of any other than a managerial relationship. To the Daly brothers, Morris was a difficult actress whom nothing would satisfy, like Rose Eytinge and

²²² Barbara Wallace Grossman, *A Spectacle of Suffering: Clara Morris on the American Stage* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 86-87.

²²³ Grossman identifies him as John A. Ellsler, manager of the theatre in which she had worked since the age of thirteen. Grossman, 54-55. I am not sure of this, as Morris often speaks of "B" or "Brownie," two of her nicknames for her lover, in the same entry in which she speaks of "Mr. Ellsler." See for instance, 22 July, 1868, where she says Mr. Ellsler thinks his liver is the cause of his illness, and then says, "Gave Mash letters to B;" and 1 January, 1869, where she notes that "B" gave her a German book and a "fine copy of 'The Deserted Village' bless his dear heart" and that after dinner "Mr. Ellsler came a few minutes, brought me a beautiful bust of Geuothé [*sic*] and a box of candy." See Clara Morris, *Diaries*, Schlesinger Library.

Agnes Ethel, “small minded, whimsical and trying,” as Joseph wrote to his brother in September of 1873.²²⁴ By October of that year, Morris had let it be known that the following season she would not be a member of Daly’s company, and Joseph was suggesting that Augustin “let her go” rather than sue her and turn her into a victim.²²⁵ The possibility of scandal was something Joseph had cautioned his brother about in taking A. Oakey Hall, with his old Tammany connections, as a business partner earlier that season.²²⁶ Surely if there had been any other than a business relationship between Daly and Morris, there would have been some attempt to pacify her or at least a discussion of the likelihood of her making a public scandal. Instead, she is simply dismissed. Whether or not Daly did in fact confide in Clara Morris with his dreams and plans, thirty years after the events, the sense of betrayal she felt at being used by Daly as though she herself were inconsequential remained strong.

The Subservient Female Within U.S. Culture

This lack of recognition of any need for reciprocity on the part of men for services rendered by women was not confined to the field of theatre. It was endemic in the culture of the nineteenth century, both before and after the Civil War. Kathleen D. McCarthy describes two quite separate events within the field of Fine Arts in which this behavior is illustrated. In 1854, Sarah W.K. Peter, founder of the Ladies Academy of Fine Art [LAFA] in Cincinnati, found herself stranded in Europe without the funds that had been promised to complete her art purchases when a Cincinnati bank failed. She wrote home that she was certain ““our men will do their duty in this emergency [and] come to our help just as we always fly to their assistance when they have need of us.”” [emphasis in original]. They did not. Peter herself bankrolled

²²⁴ Joseph Daly to John Augustin Daly, 12 September, 1873, Correspondence of Augustin Daly and Joseph F. Daly and documents serving for memoirs (Daly Correspondence), 1858-1899, NYPL-PA.

²²⁵ Joseph Daly to John Augustin Daly, 19 October, 1873. Daly Correspondence.

²²⁶ Joseph Daly to John Augustin Daly, 27 August, 1873, Daly Correspondence.

many purchases, but by 1856, LAFA was no longer a going concern. The purchases she made eventually went to McMicken University.²²⁷

The second instance took place during preparations for the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Because the male organizers were having difficulty raising funds, a nationwide Women's Committee was organized in 1873 to raise money for the fair. The committee was chaired by Mrs. E.D. Gillespie, a prominent Philadelphia society woman. According to McCarthy, Mrs. Gillespie “extracted a pledge from the board that [the Women's Committee] would have space in the main exhibition hall for an exhibit to highlight women's social, intellectual and cultural achievements.” The men agreed to this, but as soon as the money was in hand, reneged on the deal and told the women they would have to build their own building if they wanted space. The Women’s Committee raised more money and built the Women's Pavilion. But the story does not end there. In 1877, the Pennsylvania Museum (now the Philadelphia Museum of Art) was founded with the aid of many of the same women, including donations of funds left over from the Women’s’ Pavilion campaign. Although the museum grew physically from the main art gallery of the Centennial Exposition, originally funded in large part by the Women’s Committee, and relied in part on Women’s Pavilion funds, neither the charter nor the bylaws made any mention of the work and aid the women of Philadelphia had given to the Exposition or the museum. Further, all Trustees of the museum were to be men. This time, Mrs. Gillespie, who had been favored with a pre-approval copy of both documents, acted swiftly to make sure the women’s contributions would be recognized officially, not just accepted as the expected due and duty of women who had no further role to play.²²⁸

²²⁷ McCarthy, 30-32.

²²⁸ McCarthy, 127; see also: Philadelphia Museum of Art, "Museum History," 2010, <http://www.philamuseum.org/information/>, (16 January, 2010).

A particularly egregious instance of lack of recognition and cooptation may be seen in the founding of the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), mentioned earlier. The USSC, a government-sanctioned privately-run organization that arrogated to itself the control and dispensing of all voluntary contributions to the Union forces during the Civil War, began by co-opting the Women's Central Association for Relief (WCAR). Headed by Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first female doctor in the United States, the WCAR was founded days after the firing on Fort Sumter to organize the donations of food and medical supplies that were already beginning to find their way to Washington. Blackwell and her associates also planned to select and hospital-train female nurses for paid employment in army hospitals after establishing relations with the Army Medical Board. Because in those days women of good repute did not speak publicly to mixed audiences of men and women, and because as women they had no political standing, they recognized a need for male representatives to present their ideas in Washington. Therefore, for their second meeting, at Cooper Union, the women of the WCAR asked Unitarian minister Henry W. Bellows to chair the meeting. At this meeting, Bellows and several other elite men, only one of whom, Dr. Elisha Harris, was a medical man, were commissioned to go to Washington, D.C., inspect hospital and nursing facilities, form an alliance with the Army Medical Board, and obtain government sanction for the WCAR's plan. Within two weeks of the Cooper Union meeting, however, Bellows and his fellow commissioners had completely reconfigured the WCAR proposal and gained sanction for their own newly formulated, male-led organization. The WCAR became an auxiliary of the USSC; Blackwell and her nurse training program were pushed to the sidelines; and the experienced philanthropic women who originally expected to organize and administer the WCAR were discouraged from participating. Sanitary Commission officers chose young and inexperienced women of elite

families as administrative staff for the WCAR. Their upbringing and lack of experience were expected to make them more submissive to the male leadership of the USSC than their mothers would have been. That these young women were supremely successful in developing a network of Soldiers Aid Societies throughout the Union states which produced and organized the delivery of hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of supplies to the Union army during the course of the war was unexpected, and not entirely welcomed by the men of the USSC.²²⁹

Daly's behavior to Morris, and a year later to Fanny Morant, can be seen, then, not just as one man's obsession, but as culturally accepted and encouraged behavior of men generally towards women, most notably in business dealings. Publication of interviews such as the one with Mrs. Barry, in which she is positively presented as having been forced out of her domestic retirement and unable to negotiate for herself, speak to a discomfort with the growth in importance of the female star, and the larger number of women choosing to enter a theatrical career. Women did not, of course, represent direct competition with men in the field of theatre, as long as they remained dutiful members of the manager's company, willing to do without question whatever the manager asked. Only when they began to act on their own ambitions might they become competition.

Touring and Starring

The 1870s and 1880s saw a large number of women begin to act on their own ambitions. Women had, of course, toured the United States as "stars" before this period, as had men. Clara Fisher, once known as an infant prodigy, had arrived in 1827 at the age of 16 to great

²²⁹ Jeanie Attie, *Patriotic Toil, Northern Women and the American Civil War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 19-86 ; Judith Ann Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood, The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 14-52.

enthusiasm, and had toured all the major cities of the period.²³⁰ Fanny Kemble, as already noted, arrived in 1832 and toured with her father for a year and a half, “lionized by the press,” as Mullenix describes it, until her marriage and retirement.²³¹ Anna Cora Mowatt went on stage for the first time and as a star in 1845, and toured the U.S. and England for eight years.²³² By 1849, Charlotte Cushman was demanding the same cut of the house—50% —as male stars Edwin Forrest and William Macready received.²³³ And these are just the actresses best known today. Clara Morris mentions several other women during her own early days in stock: Caroline Richings, Mrs. D.P. Bowers, Lucille Western, and Sallie St. Clair.²³⁴ Noah Ludlow writes of Mrs. Whitlock, who was a sister of Sarah Siddons, Mrs. Waring, Miss Ann Waring, Eliza Riddle, Mrs. Knight “the vocalist,” Miss Dunham, Mrs. Bateman, Mrs. McClure...too many women to list here, all of whom were travelling “stars” in their day.²³⁵ Olive Logan returned from France in the middle of the Civil War and despite being virtually unknown to the majority of theatregoers, made her own “star” tour accompanied by her mother.²³⁶ But there was a major difference between starring before and during the Civil War and starring after it. Before the war, stars would travel, often on their own, sometimes with a partner, and occasionally, as did James Wallack, Jr., E.L. Davenport, and Rose Eytinge, as a threesome, with their costumes and major props in their bags. Most of the women stars travelling before the war travelled with their husbands, who acted as their business managers. When they were unmarried, their fathers (or occasionally their mothers) usually took the role of manager. Clara Fisher and Fanny Kemble both starred under their father’s management, for instance. The actors (or their husbands or

²³⁰ Eugene H. Jones, “Fisher, Clara,” ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 279.

²³¹ Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix, “‘So Unfemininely Masculine’: Discourse, True/False Womanhood, and the American Career of Fanny Kemble,” *Theatre Survey* 40, no. 2 (1999): 29.

²³² Barnes, 106; see also Mowatt.

²³³ Merrill, 163.

²³⁴ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 83-85, 122, 126-128, 139-151.

²³⁵ Ludlow. See Table of Contents for names and page references.

²³⁶ Logan, chapters 20-22, 191-271.

parents) were themselves responsible for setting up their touring circuit, negotiating for their share of box office income, and sending ahead their version of the scripts they would perform. The theatre managers would pre-cast the play with actors from their stock company and make any necessary set and property arrangements. When the star(s) arrived, the stock company would meet for one or two blocking rehearsals, and the show would go on.

Touring as a star brought much greater remuneration than remaining in a stock company. The leading man in a stock company might receive between \$30 and \$40 a week during the pre-war period, and a leading lady \$25 to \$35. Supporting actors and actresses, such as soubrettes (what we might call character leads or simply *comédiennes*), walking ladies and gentlemen, performers playing “old” or “heavy” man or woman, would receive less. Beginners might receive as little as three or four dollars a week. Touring stars on the other hand, might be paid \$100, \$200, even \$250 a week for an extended engagement. If they were major stars, such as Charlotte Cushman or Edwin Forrest, as mentioned above, they could also receive a percentage of the box office, bringing their compensation into the thousands per week.²³⁷ But in comparison to those starring after the Civil War, most antebellum starring was a small-time, family business operation. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, touring (and starring) became a large, almost industrial, concern, rarely under the complete control of the star, whether male or female.

As Peter Davis has noted, many stock companies simply could not continue operations after the Panic of 1873. The audiences disappeared when their money disappeared, and maintaining a full company of stock actors, who received salaries whether or not they performed, became untenable.²³⁸ At the same time, railroad travel grew exponentially faster, cheaper, and easier. Between 1869 and 1873, according to Davis, 26,000 miles of track were laid, which

²³⁷ Edna Hammer Cooley, "Women in American Theatre, 1850-1870: A Study in Professional Equity" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1986), 67-68, 72-73, ProQuest, (AAT 8620759).

²³⁸ Davis, "Stock to Combination," 7-8.

doubled the amount existing in 1861. By 1885, according to Carl N. Degler, it cost just seven-tenths of a penny to transport one ton of freight one mile on U.S. railroads.²³⁹ Not only were agricultural and industrial goods able to cheaply get from farm and factory to far-off markets with relative ease and speed, but complete theatrical productions, including all sets and props, and full repertory companies were able to travel from their points of origin (usually New York) to cities and towns that had rarely seen Broadway production values or major theatrical stars. And this allowed actor-managers and producers much more control over the artistic product than the old system had. These companies, then as now, were called “combination” companies.

Top class combination companies were built around stars such as Joseph Jefferson, Frank Mayo, Lawrence Barrett, Edwin Booth. During the 1870s, well before Sarah Bernhardt’s arrival, and continuing into the 1880s, numbers of women also launched starring combination tours. Lydia Thompson’s 1868-1870 burlesque company tour was one of the first combinations built around a female star. The 1870s also saw starring ventures by Agnes Ethel (1872), Clara Morris (1874), and Mary Anderson, Kate Claxton, and Fanny Davenport, all in 1877. During the 1880s, Marie Prescott attempted to launch herself as an independent star, and Margaret Mather was brought out by manager J.M. Hill and eventually, after two failed marriages, began to manage her own company.²⁴⁰

At the same time, therefore, that women were striking out as stars on their own, the business of theatre saw a concerted effort to force actresses to submit to the dictates of managers and to hold their labor captive. Some of this trend was probably part of the growing

²³⁹ Carl N. Degler, *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1984), 259.

²⁴⁰ Marra, 41; Sawyer, 24-25; Agosta, 671; "Our Gallery of Players. Kate Claxton," *Illustrated American*, 20 August 1892, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC; Cole, 193; "Death of Marie Prescott," *NYT*, 30 August 1893, mounted clipping in Union Square Theatre collection, HTC; "Margaret Mather to Star Again," *NYDM*, 1 February 1896, 12.

industrialization of the business of theatre and may have impacted male as well as female performers. McArthur notes that the major producers of the late nineteenth century, the Frohman brothers and Al Hayman, for instance, came from the business side of theatre and had no creative backgrounds at all.²⁴¹ Their concern for efficient business practices may have incited them to try to keep performers under the same type of control that major industrialists of the period often imposed upon their employees. And some of the attempts at control must have been in response to Daly's success in providing high-class and successful productions, apparently connected to his establishing dictatorial control, particularly over women.

The New Importance of the Female Audience

For women had become extremely important attractions, not just in Daly's theatre, but in all theatres. This was not just because of the objectifying Sporting Life culture discussed in Chapter Two. Starting during the 1850s and by 1870 in full throttle, women were growing to be a major part of the theatrical audience. Richard Butsch suggests that after the war and the Panic, theatres pursued female audiences because they needed the new market. Men were deserting the "drama theater" for burlesque, the fights, and the concert saloons. In addition, due to the aftermath of the Panic, the male-only audience was shrinking. Theatre managers simply needed a larger market, according to Butsch.²⁴² In 1859, *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* asked whether a production at the Winter Garden could survive without the "regulation" leading man "with a curly head of hair and naughty reputation." "Do you positively believe," asked this critic, "that female Young New York will lift up the light of its divine countenance upon you" without such a

²⁴¹ McArthur, 19.

²⁴² Richard Butsch, "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1994): 373.

cast member?²⁴³ The young female audience had already become a financial necessity. In 1870, the *New York Clipper* noted that

‘Frou-Frou’ at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, runs as smoothly as a ship gliding off the ways into its destined element. Not to have seen ‘Frou-Frou’ several times would place you out of the pale of fashionable and civilized life. Gushing girls weep over the fall of Gilberte, yet give them the same opportunity and they would pursue the same evil line of conduct.²⁴⁴

Daly’s new theatre had had a terrible first season, until, that is, the young female audience turned out in droves to see *Frou-Frou*.²⁴⁵

Controlling the Female Star

Many attempts to control the work product of female performers seem to have been a reaction to the newly independent behaviors and expectations of the female performers upon whom managers were becoming so dependent. But these behaviors mirrored developments and ways of thinking of the middle-class female audience, as well. Thus the controlling behaviors of managers and, as will become apparent, the legal system, reflected fears of loss of control to this new idea of the role of Woman. And the actions of theatrical managers against their female stars, usually well publicized, may have provided instruction of a sort for those in other fields regarding how to control women who were entering other areas of endeavor.

The Frohman brothers seem to have begun a campaign in the early 1880s to test their female stars’ patience and obedience to their will. By 1881, Daniel, Charles, and Gustave Frohman for all intents and purposes ran the Madison Square Theatre that had been built for Steele MacKaye by George Mallory, a clergyman, and his brother Marshall, editor of the *Churchman*. Just before MacKaye left, Daniel Frohman was hired as manager. While

²⁴³ [Untitled], *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 1 October 1859, 48.

²⁴⁴ [Untitled], *Clipper*, 16 April 1870, 14.

²⁴⁵ Marvin Felheim, *The Theater of Augustin Daly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 11.

MacKaye's *Hazel Kirke*, then titled *An Iron Will*, was on the road in what would eventually come to be called "out of town tryouts," Gustave was hired as manager of travelling companies. Gustave later hired Charles as his assistant.²⁴⁶ The first touring company of what was now *Hazel Kirke* went out on the road while the original production was still running, and starred Effie Ellsler, who had originated the title role when the play opened the Madison Square Theatre in February of 1880, making a huge hit. When the tour went out in January of 1881, Georgia Cayvan took over the lead at the Madison Square.²⁴⁷ In December of 1882, Effie Ellsler left the tour. According to her, the Frohmans had replaced Harry Lee with an "incompetent" actor in the romantic lead role of Lord Travers and refused to reconsider. According to Charles Frohman, Ellsler was just being "whimsical." "It was not the Travers she objected to," Charles Frohman told the *Mirror*,

it was the special Travers she *wanted* that *we* objected to. Couldock said if we engaged Lee he would resign. We cannot afford to lose Couldock, and we didn't need Lee. Then she wanted her husband to play the part. After that she found out that the Madison Square was managing the company, and she was allowed to step out. Miss Ellsler has been advised by some people behind her in this matter. She will soon find how disinterested this advice is.²⁴⁸

Frohman further stated in this article that their company never promised actors any control over who would be in the company with them. They had made an exception in Ellsler's case when they had agreed to take her father, John A. Ellsler, in her company.

The patronizing use of the word "whimsical" and the attempt to separate Ellsler from the "people behind her" indicate that the family model of business is at play here, in addition to the industrialization of theatre. The statement that they could not afford to lose Couldock insinuates that they *could* afford to lose Ellsler, reinforcing the idea that a woman's contributions were of

²⁴⁶ Isaac Marcossion and Daniel Frohman, *Charles Frohman: Manager and Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1916), 67-69.

²⁴⁷ See various articles in the Effie Ellsler and Georgia Cayvan files in BRTC. See also Gagey, 314.

²⁴⁸ "Effie Ellsler's Defection," *NYDM*, 16 December 1882, 3.

no particular worth. There is a public attempt to cut Ellsler off from her own support and bring her firmly into the Frohman theatre “family,” where she would be protected from her own “whimsical” ideas by the men of this family. However, the “people behind” Ellsler included preeminently her new husband, Frank Weston, and possibly her father, who until the demise of the stock system had successfully managed several theatres in Cleveland and Cincinnati. Their advice was of course no more “disinterested” than Charles Frohman’s. The Ellsler-Westons were working under an older model of theatre, however, one that recognized the individual value of the performer and assumed that her individual qualities were responsible for the success of the production. In the case of female performers particularly, this dovetailed nicely with the newer independent model of womanhood, as well as with the growth in prominence of female starring tours. It is to be noted that the Frohmans, calling up a corporate model of theatre in which the production rather than the performer is of greatest importance, also utilized the newer model of womanhood by attacking Ellsler directly, and in fact challenging her independence from “the people behind her,” to no avail. The Westons threatened to sue if the Madison Square continued to post bills advertising Ellsler in the role and suggested that there might be financial problems with the theatres on the route, since their contracts specified Ellsler’s appearance. But the Frohmans appear to have had the last word. Charles Frohman stated they would not bother to sue the Westons because “the affair [was] not of sufficient importance” to them. “Hazel Kirke, the play, goes on as ever, and probably forever,” said Frohman to the *Mirror*.²⁴⁹

What had happened between January of 1881, when the Frohmans were willing to please Ellsler by including her father in the touring company, and December of 1882, when the leading tragedian playing Dunstan Kirke was portrayed in the professional press as more important than

²⁴⁹ "Effie Ellsler's Defection."

the woman playing the title role?²⁵⁰ First of all, in order to keep the show on the boards after it began to pick up an audience in early 1880, MacKaye and the Mallory brothers, who owned the Madison Square Theatre, had shelved Rose Coghlan, who was at that time rehearsing for a show that was to have replaced *Hazel Kirke*, which they had thought was a failure.²⁵¹ By paying her the salary agreed upon in their contract, they managed to keep Coghlan available for themselves and off the stage for an entire year. It is probable that the treatment of Coghlan by the Mallory brothers and MacKaye was related to the decision in *Smith v. Daly* six years previously. In this case, Fanny Morant (Mrs. Charles Smith in private life) quit her employment with Augustin Daly and offered to pay well over the customary damages for breaking a contract. Daly sued her and won. The judge's decision was based on a case that had been decided in England before the U.S. Civil War, *Lumley v. Wagner*. In this action, opera singer Johanna Wagner was enjoined from quitting the employ of theatre manager Benjamin Lumley and performing for any other manager in London for the term of her original contract with Lumley. This case had no traction in the United States until, in 1871, Judge Joseph F. Daly, Augustin Daly's brother, based his decision in *Hayes v. Willio* on the *Lumley* decision, supporting the rights of theatre manager Hayes to the "fruits of his diligence and enterprise" over the right of the performer, Willio, to the fruits of his own labor and the Thirteenth Amendment right to quit.²⁵² Daly's decision was overturned on appeal, and until the early twentieth century, as legal scholar Lea VanderVelde has shown,

²⁵⁰ A perusal of playbills and programs shows that the Frohmans, perhaps following Daly's practice, generally did not "star" performers in their programs or advertising. They presented the Madison Square Theatre Company as a whole. However, before Ellsler's departure, they often listed the female characters first, which put Ellsler's name first among equals and at the top of the program, while Couldock's name was first among the men. Occasionally, and more often in the earlier period, the male characters would be listed first. After Ellsler's departure, they began to list the cast in order of appearance, which had the effect of putting the actor playing Dunstan Kirke first, and the actress playing Hazel third. This was the case in every program or playbill found from early 1883 through 1885. See "Hazel Kirke" program files in BRTC.

²⁵¹ Daniel Frohman, *Daniel Frohman Presents: An Autobiography* (New York: Claude Kendall & Willoughby Sharp, 1935), 44-46.

²⁵² Lea S. VanderVelde, "The Gendered Origins of the Lumley Doctrine: Binding Men's Consciences and Women's Fidelity," *Yale Law Journal* 101 (1992): 804-806, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/796874>.

Willio was the only man to be enjoined under the *Lumley* rule. But the judge in *Daly v. Smith* used arguments so similar to Judge Daly's in *Hayes* that VanderVelde suggests his decision was "ghost written" by Judge Daly. Fanny Morant was enjoined from performing in any other theatre in New York City for the duration of her original contract with Augustin Daly, as long as he paid her 25% of her contracted salary. The judge in *Smith*, VanderVelde suggests, did not recognize Morant's interest in or ambition for her career and reputation as a valid concern.²⁵³

With the *Smith* decision setting a precedent, it seems Rose Coghlan decided not to sue. I have found no news regarding any lawsuit by Coghlan in the newspapers of the time, and more tellingly, VanderVelde does not mention any case involving her and the Frohmans or the Mallory brothers in her detailed and lengthy article regarding the influence of the *Lumley* decision in the United States. But at the beginning of March, 1883, "Colonel" John McCaull, manager of the Bijou Opera House, sued under *Lumley* to enjoin a young Lillian Russell from singing in any other venue during the period of her contract with him, even though there was no exclusivity clause in the contract and her additional performances did not interfere with her contracted appearances.²⁵⁴ Given Rose Coghlan's recent experience with the Madison Square Theatre company, the Westons may have awaited the Russell decision and decided not to sue when that case was decided in favor of management, rather than the (female) performer. With the support behind the legal scenes of a judge sympathetic to managers rather than performers, and the success of their handling of Coghlan, the Frohmans undoubtedly felt confident that if Ellsler and Weston sued, they would probably lose. The lack of any lawsuit on the part of Effie Ellsler and her husband indicates that they thought so, too. The Frohman/Mallory decision to treat Ellsler's defection as of no importance harks back even further, to Daly's decision to allow

²⁵³ VanderVelde: 806-811. For "ghost written" see 811.

²⁵⁴ VanderVelde: 813-814 and n192 & n199.

Clara Morris to break her contract and leave his company, rather than give her additional publicity in the courts.²⁵⁵

Finally, soon after sending out the Ellsler road company, the Frohmans conceived the idea of sending out numerous road companies of the same show, each geared to a particular circuit with a particular audience, theatre size, and technical abilities.²⁵⁶ Ellsler's company had simply become the "No.1 company." For the first time, a manager was branding a play, not the star. Allowing one woman to become identified with the role would stand in the way of this new industrial model and give her and her backers much too much power. In fact, later *Hazel Kirke* companies, when not referred to by number, were referred to by the name of the leading male – the Couldock company, the Charles Wheatleigh company, etc.,²⁵⁷ and the title role became one that many young women cycled through on their attempted climb to the top.

In 1883, an older, more established actress, Agnes Booth, again challenged the Madison Square Theatre industrial family model when she refused to play as cast by Daniel Frohman in a revival of Bronson Howard's *Young Mrs. Winthrop* in Boston. Dan Frohman and the Mallory brothers tried to make it appear as though she were being inconsistent in objecting to travelling when the part did not suit her. Dan Frohman is quoted in the *Mirror* as saying,

As there were no parts for Mrs. Booth in the opening plays at the Madison Square, we wanted her to play the part of Young Mrs. Winthrop in Boston for an engagement of two weeks, and possibly one week in Philadelphia, and another in Brooklyn. This was all the

²⁵⁵ Joseph Daly to John Augustin Daly, 19 October, 1873, Daly Correspondence; Marra, 42. Morris's "defection" was the last time Daly allowed a broken contract from a female performer. Fanny Morant was the next woman to attempt it. Morris, at the time, was a hot new "emotional" actress, later often compared to Sarah Bernhardt in her abilities. She had garnered a very large and enthusiastic audience for herself, as well as for Daly's theatre. Daly's ungentlemanly behavior regarding her salary would have been very damaging to his reputation had it become known, and the public sympathy Morris would have received would have raised her higher in audience estimation. For that reason, undoubtedly, Joseph Daly advised his brother to "let her go." Morant, although popular and respected as a leading lady did not have Morris's genius or following. And of course, it is possible that the exclusion clauses had been added to the contracts after Morris's departure.

²⁵⁶ Marcossou and Frohman, 68.

²⁵⁷ "Bijou Heron," *NYDM*, 10 February 1883, 2; "Belle Archer," *Clipper*, November[?] 1884, 519.

travelling that Mrs. Booth was asked to do. She agreed to do this provided she could play Mrs. Dick instead of Young Mrs. Winthrop,...²⁵⁸

Mrs. Booth wanted to play Mrs. Dick because it was the part she had had the most success with in New York. She did not wish to play a part in Boston that might gain less critical esteem and audience favor. In other words, she felt playing Mrs. Winthrop might hurt her reputation and thus her career. Her objection to travelling was only an objection to long tours that would take her out of the larger cities of the northeast. Her husband, Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., Edwin's older brother, was in very poor health, and she wanted to be easily reachable and available should she have to go to his bedside. Therefore, she told the *Mirror*, when she signed her contract with the Madison Square, it was verbally agreed that she would not have to tour, although the travelling clause remained in the contract. "But this traveling clause was not the cause of contention," according to the *Mirror*. "Mrs. Booth's grievance lay deeper. She objected to being made a convenience in the Madison Square casts." Standing up for her individual rights as a performer, Booth explained her concerns as follows:

When Mrs. Winthrop was revived [in New York], I naturally expected to resume the part of Mrs. Dick; but without saying a word to me, Ada Dyas was cast for it, and I was put down for Mrs. Winthrop. I raised a strong protest against this swopping of parts, but the Mallorys asked me as a favor to them to play Mrs. Winthrop, as they wanted to give variety to the cast, and I consented; but it was a great sacrifice. I wanted to renew my former hit. I had considerable artistic feeling about it...

Her concern was her professional reputation as an artist. However, Mrs. Booth then returned to the idea of reciprocity and her individual worth as a human being:

They are hard men, the Mallorys, and will grant no favors. Yet I have granted favors to them. I have played at special performances to oblige them, and have been ill at the time. I have played for them on a 'souvenir' night when I was suffering from pneumonia, and I have, to help a performance along, rehearsed and played with a debutante when I had a serious trouble with my eyes. I have, in short, done many things for which I had no reason other than to oblige them, and then they talk of forcing me to keep a written contract which was supplemented by a verbal understanding; they take away my best part

²⁵⁸ "Agnes Booth's Withdrawal," *NYDM*, 28 July 1883, 2.

and treat me as if I were an automaton. I don't know yet what I shall do next season; but I shall never play for the Mallorys again.

She had granted them favors and expected consideration in return. But it appears they did not see her behavior as favors; they saw it as capitulation, submission, or obedience, all to be expected from a woman to a group of men. Nor did they recognize her concern for her professional reputation as valid. Mrs. Booth absolves Daniel Frohman of any responsibility for this situation, stating that he was “kind and gentlemanly throughout.” But as Frohman was manager of the theatre at that time, and given the industrialization of the theatrical product already developed with *Hazel Kirke*, which is also behind the role-swapping against which Mrs. Booth was protesting, it is possible, even probable, that Frohman allowed the Mallorys to front for him in this negotiation so as to maintain his gentlemanly demeanor – a sort of “good cop/bad cop” situation.

In April of 1885, Viola Allen refused to go on, rather than allow the management of the Lyceum Theatre, then Wesley Sisson and Steele MacKaye, to treat her as an interchangeable part. Like the episodes above, the affair took on the overtones of a *pater familias* attempting to discipline an unruly female family member. Miss Allen had been asked to provide the manuscript of her part to Sisson and MacKaye so they could prepare an understudy “for possible emergencies.” She then learned that Kate Forsyth had secretly been offered the part as a replacement for her. According to the *Mirror*,

This information was only given her as she was going to the theatre at night, and upon her arrival there she told Messrs. Sisson and MacKaye that as she considered herself deceived in the matter of obtaining the manuscript of her part and had learned the real reason, she would require of them that they give her a written guarantee that she should not be supplanted by any one during the term for which she had been engaged—six weeks. This request was refused and she declined to go on the stage until the pledge was given.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ "The Lyceum Closed," *NYDM*, 18 April 1885, 6.

Rather than give in, the *Mirror* reported, Sisson refunded the ticket money and sent the audience home, saying that “‘Miss Allen was indisposed—not physically, but mentally,’ thus leaving the audience in doubt as to the nature of the lady's or the management's trouble.” The *Mirror* itself did not seem to recognize that Allen had any real grievance in the matter, although the paper recognized that she *felt* that she did: “Miss Allen feels very much aggrieved at what she considers a public insult to her for trying to maintain her dignity and position as an artiste,” says the reporter. Then, as though she ought to have simply obeyed the management, or allowed herself to be discharged without cause or notice, the reporter finishes up by saying, “At the same time her action may be construed as unprofessional—it was certainly ill-advised.” That the behavior of Sisson and MacKaye was not just unprofessional, but dishonest and unscrupulous, is not suggested.

That Sisson and MacKaye actually closed the theatre and refunded the ticket money rather than sign a six-week contract with Miss Allen indicates just how important disciplining this unruly female was to them. The fact that this young woman—she was only 18 at the time, and very far, professionally, from the stardom she would attain—felt herself empowered to challenge them indicates that something had changed in the way young women thought of themselves. I suggest that what had changed was the way in which women in general were being brought up to think of themselves, and that this change was due to women's newly recognized role as individuals in civil society after the Civil War. In the theatre world, where women and men were mythically supposed to have been on equal footing for centuries, the relationship between women and men *as* women and men, not just as workers and management, was being publicly renegotiated. Women were publicly demanding and expecting to be treated as equal adults, with services to sell or bargain for and with favors to grant on a reciprocal basis. The

men, who were also almost exclusively in the position of manager at this time,²⁶⁰ were attempting to re-organize the business of theatre along the industrial family model and were in effect publicly trying to put women back into the pumpkin shell from which they had emerged during the war. They needed, as well as expected, the women in these “families” to submit themselves to their authority. The three women just discussed were members of theatrical families, and two were prominent within the field at the time of these incidents – Effie Ellsler due largely to her success in *Hazel Kirke*, but known to be the daughter of an old and respected stock company manager; and Agnes Booth, respected as one of the best leading ladies of the period in her own right, and carrying with her the Booth family name. It may be that the managers hoped that by subduing women as popular and well-thought-of as Ellsler or Booth, or one who felt as “entitled” as Allen apparently did, managers as a group would be more easily able to control female performers with less clout. If women such as these found themselves treated in such cavalier fashion, it is not difficult to imagine the pressures and treatment that women on the lower rungs of the theatrical ladder had to deal with.

Daly’s obsession with taming the wild actress, and by extension, the independence of women after the Civil War, was therefore an individual expression of the general discomfort within the dominant culture regarding women’s independence of action. But his obsession had wide-reaching and long-term consequences for female performers.

Divorce

At the same time as theatrical managers were attempting to corral their female performers, and extending well past the point of their success in this effort, the growing

²⁶⁰ Mrs. John Drew managed the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, until 1892, but by the 1880s, she was the only woman manager left. See Rosemarie K. Bank, "Drew, Louisa Lane," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 232.

institution of divorce also became symbolic of cultural fears about women's growing independence. VanderVelde discusses the importance of divorce law in New York State as a model for the judgements in the *Lumley* decisions in New York during the last three decades of the nineteenth century.²⁶¹ Until 1966, when New York State divorce law was modified for the first time since 1787, New York had the most restrictive divorce law in the nation.²⁶² Adultery was the only ground recognized for divorce, and usually, the "adulterer" was enjoined from remarrying during the life of the ex-spouse.²⁶³ Most performers (and many other New York State citizens, male and female), got around these limitations by divorcing and/or remarrying in other states. But the legal climate in New York, the center of theatrical business and theatrical contracts, remained extremely restrictive with regard to marital relationships between men and women.

This legal restrictiveness, as VanderVelde has shown, extended to the business relationships between female performers and their male managers, as well. Rose Coghlan's problem with the Mallory brothers and Daniel Frohman has been discussed above with reference to the 1874 *Smith v. Daly* decision. VanderVelde notes that the judge in that case introduced the term "faithful" when discussing Fanny Morant's responsibilities towards Daly, a term that suggests the employee is of lower status than the employer and owes fealty to the employer that the employer does not owe to the employee. No reference to such a notion existed in the original

²⁶¹ VanderVelde: 831-833.

²⁶² Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: A History of Divorce in Western Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 444-445; Glenda Riley, *Divorce: An American Tradition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 157. As this is being written, a no-fault divorce law has passed the New York State Senate and awaits a vote in the state Assembly. New York remains the only state in the union without a no-fault divorce law as of June 15, 2010.

²⁶³ Phillips, 444; VanderVelde: 833.

Lumley decision.²⁶⁴ And in New York State, faithfulness in marriage was always under discussion in cases of divorce.

In 1891, eight years after her first run-in with *Lumley*, Lillian Russell was again enjoined from quitting the employment of a manager, James C. Duff, brother-in-law of Augustin Daly. By this time she was a major star with an established reputation for breaking contracts, both business and marital. In this case, the judge, who was the same judge who had decided the *Smith v. Daly* dispute, enjoined her from quitting her contract even though, again, there was no exclusivity clause in it. The judge “exhibited an almost prurient interest in Lillian Russell's reasons for quitting by devoting the majority of the opinion to them,” says VanderVelde. It appeared that Russell had also been feeling out other performing opportunities, and it is this that the judge cited as “the real reason for her breaking off her contract,” a reason which, despite the lack of exclusivity clause in her contract, he considered “inexcusable.”²⁶⁵ She was contemplating professional adultery. Three other cases through the decade of the 1890s tightened the ropes restraining female performers from leaving an employer. There were no cases similarly enjoining male performers.²⁶⁶ As VanderVelde puts it, under *Lumley* as first interpreted by Judge Joseph Daly, in New York State “unfaithful women performers could be prevented from performing for any employer for the term of the contract, just as unfaithful wives could be prevented from remarrying for life.”²⁶⁷ Divorce was by no means limited to women in the theatrical profession, as we shall see. But given the legal record, it is not surprising to find that the discomfort around the independence of female performers and the growing independence of women in general is also reflected in stories about female performers’ marriage, retirement, and return to the stage.

²⁶⁴ VanderVelde: 809.

²⁶⁵ VanderVelde: 816-817.

²⁶⁶ VanderVelde: 828. See 819 and following for development of this.

²⁶⁷ VanderVelde: 833.

Even in the nineteenth century, the United States led the European and Euro-colonized world in the arena of divorce, and in fact, the United States was often held up as an example of the dangers of liberal divorce laws.²⁶⁸ By 1850, almost every state and territory had divorce laws on their books (the exception was South Carolina), although the grounds for divorce and the residency requirements varied widely.²⁶⁹ There was a surge of about 60% in the number of divorces in the immediate postwar period, supporting a perception that divorce was on the increase in the United States. This perception, which prompted an initial survey of divorce in four New England states published in 1880, was also the motivation behind the formation of the New England Divorce Reform League. This organization was eventually successful in convincing Congress to fund a national study on divorce. The first study was published in 1889,²⁷⁰ and a follow-up study, covering the years from 1867 to 1906, was published in 1909. These studies both show that although the *number* of divorces had increased since the Civil War, the *proportion* of divorces to marriages per thousand varied very little during the first two decades following the war. According to Roderick Phillips, the divorce rate per one thousand marriages was between 1.0 and 1.2 in the early 1860s, rising to 1.4 in the last year of the war. Divorces reached a high for the decade in 1866, with 1.8 divorces per one thousand marriages, and leveled off thereafter at 1.5 per one thousand.²⁷¹ By 1880, however, the divorce rate was up to 2.2 per one thousand marriages; by 1890 it had increased again to 3.0 and by 1900, the rate was 4.0 per one thousand marriages.²⁷² A rate of between two and four divorces per thousand marriages seems miniscule to us, but it was troubling to people in the late nineteenth century.

²⁶⁸ Riley, 80; see also Phillips, 462-464.

²⁶⁹ Riley, 53-71.

²⁷⁰ Phillips, 462.

²⁷¹ Phillips, 459. Table 11.1.

²⁷² Phillips, 463. Table 11.3.

Divorce rates are not available by occupation, but a ranking of reported divorces to occupational numbers is. At the end of the century, the census category of “Actors, professional showmen, etc.” ranked first in eight out of nine states surveyed by the U.S. Department of Commerce, and second in South Dakota,²⁷³ the state which by that time had become the “divorce mill” state. Although the Department of Commerce report only provides figures for divorce among men, women in the general population were granted about twice as many divorces as men received from 1867 to 1906,²⁷⁴ and it is reasonable to assume a similar ratio for female performers. The higher rate of divorce among show people during this period was probably due in large part to the separation of couples during long touring engagements. But as will be discussed later in this chapter, it may also have been related to female performers’ awareness that they did not have to be dependent on a man for their living.

Most of the women in the database were married, or involved in a long-term relationship with a man, during all or part of their careers. Records of at least one marriage or long-term relationship are available for 65% of the women in the database—499 women. The 65% figure does not mean that the other 35% of the database did not marry at some point, or have committed relationships with men (or women). It simply means that *no* information about their committed personal relationships has been found in press materials, obituaries, or in personal correspondence.

These 499 women are responsible for a total of 731 marriages or significant attachments from 1823 through 1934.²⁷⁵ Of the 731 marriages, 28% ended in divorce or separation, equal to

²⁷³ *Special Report: Marriage and Divorce 1867-1906*, Bureau of the Census U.S. Department of Commerce, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909); for divorce mills, see Riley, 85-107.

²⁷⁴ Riley, 90.

²⁷⁵ Only seven of the 731 marriages were not legal unions: Anna Held's to Florenz Ziegfeld and Lily Post's to Billy Goodwin, both in the late 1890s; Louise Montague's to John Davidson in 1900 (she sued him when he didn't provide the house he'd offered her to leave the stage); Katharine Rogers with Dion Boucicault some time around 1870; and Katherine Wallace and Nellie Stewart, both of whose liaisons may have been simple business partnerships

2.8 divorces and separations per one thousand marriages over the century. Twenty-six percent ended when the man died, and 25% ended when the woman died. No information has been found on the balance. Methods through which a marriage might end would appear to have been fairly evenly divided overall. But mirroring the trend in the general population, there was an enormous increase in divorce and separation in marriages that took place during the 1880s, 90s, and nineteen-oughts. Fifty-four percent of all marriages that ended in divorce or separation took place during this period. As table III.1 shows, the marriages the women in this database contracted during the last two decades of the nineteenth century ended in divorce or separation twice as often as those of the general population. The sample population is relatively small for the nineteen-oughts, and quite limited for the 1910s, leading to a surprising reversal of the trend set for the 1880s and 90s; that is, the women in the database seem to have divorced *less* often than the general population in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It is probable that if marriage and divorce information could be found for more female performers during these decades, the two-to-one ratio in favor of performers would reassert itself. This is certainly what the Department of Commerce report found for men. But growing press interest in the divorce of female performers, particularly those who had retired upon marriage, also indicates a continuing upward trend.

recast as something more by the press. May Brookyn's 1893 engagement is also included here. Her fiance killed himself over gambling debts, and she then committed suicide as well. See Marilyn McKay, "Held, Anna," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger (1989), 408; [Lily Post], *Toledo Blade*, 6 April 1899, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC; "Louise Montague, Made Famous by Adam Forepaugh, Asks Damages."; "Katharine Rogers," *Spirit*, 26 December 1891, obituary in Locke envelope, BRTC; "Aussie Biog of Nell Stewart," *Variety*, 21 August 1974, clipping in Nellie Stewart clippings files, BRTC; "Obituary. May Brookyn.," *NYDM*, 24 February 1894. For Katherine Wallace, see card in BRTC card catalog. Information was found on only four women who clearly preferred women to men. All but one of them, Mlle. Hortense Rhea, have been subjects of biographical studies-- Charlotte Cushman, Maude Adams, and Elsie De Wolfe. Mlle. Rhea a French-trained classical actress, died in 1899 at the age of 55, cared for "up to the last by her devoted companion, Marie Michailoff." She had spent five years in Russia early in her career, which is probably where she met Michailoff. She never married.

Table III.1: Divorce rates

<i>Marriage Decade</i>	<i># of marriages</i>	<i># div./sep.</i>	<i># per 1,000 marriages</i>	<i>U.S. divorce rates by decade</i>
before 1820	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
1820s	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
1830s	13	3	2.3	n/a
1840s	19	2	1.1	n/a
1850s	33	13	3.9	n/a
1860s	56	11	2.0	1.2
1870s	57	13	2.3	1.2
1880s	102	46	4.5	2.2
1890s	99	46	4.6	3.0
1900s	58	18	3.1	4.0
1910s	24	6	2.5	4.5
1920s	9	5	5.6	n/a
1930s	4	2	5.0	n/a
No wedding	256	36	1.4	n/a
Totals:	731	201	2.7	n/a

Source: U.S. divorce rates from Phillips, 463

The fact that these women divorced at a rate twice that of the general population, combined with the growth of press interest in performers generally, threw a virtual spotlight on actresses' practices regarding marriage and divorce, from both inside and outside of the profession, as the century progressed. Research on divorced women in this database revealed just two articles about an actress's divorce in the late 1860s. Rose Eytinge, age 24, "has been married, but separated from her husband; husband to blame--as usual," says a writer from an unidentifiable paper in 1868. The following year, Madeleine Henriques' return from marriage retirement (described by the writer in marital terms as a "short estrangement" from the theatre audience) to Wallack's Theatre is noted as "the feature of the evening," and her warm welcome from the audience is described. In 1875, Mrs. Melinda Jones' obituary reveals that she had twenty years previously been divorced from a Mr. George Jones, better known to American

theatre historians as the rather flamboyant Count Johannes.²⁷⁶ But twelve stories were found in the 1880s mentioning divorce, including several in which the divorce is the subject of the story, and there are 62 stories in the database about or mentioning divorce published during the 1890s.

Part of the growth in this type of story is due to changes in the practice of journalism after the Civil War. Before the war, newspapers were dependent on political patronage, and were almost entirely devoted to reporting political news from the point of view of the supporting party or faction. A column or so might be devoted to theatre. During the war, the public became used to the independent, on-the-spot, battlefield reporting that became the norm and did not return to subscription support of partisan papers at the war's end.²⁷⁷ In 1875, the requirement that all Federal laws be published in local papers was repealed, and with this, much of the money for political patronage of the press dried up.²⁷⁸ Publishers found their circulation more and more dependent on newsstand sales, and thus more and more dependent on retail advertising, which drove a further concern with circulation. The goal of journalism became to provide unbiased news, reliable special features (predominantly financial), and particularly in the evening and Sunday editions, entertainment for the working man of many different classes and the family to whom he brought home the paper.²⁷⁹ This was the age of Pulitzer and Hearst and yellow journalism. Murder and mayhem was one type of entertainment. Stories about show business were another. The admittedly very unscientific survey of divorce stories above both tracks these changes in journalism, and supports the idea that, reflecting the larger society's concern about

²⁷⁶ "Miss Rose Eytinge," 28 March 1868, unidentified clipping in Robinson-Locke scrapbook, BRTC; "Wallack's Theatre," *Spirit*, 25 September 1869, review in Locke envelope, BRTC; "The Late Melinda Jones," 17 December 1875, clipping in Union Square Theatre Collection, HTC.

²⁷⁷ Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 1.

²⁷⁸ Smythe, 50.

²⁷⁹ Smythe, 53-55, 58, 65, 80, 90, 131, 141, 149, 163, 165.

the subject of divorce, the marriages and divorces of actresses had a growing significance for nineteenth century audiences and the journalists that wrote for them.

In addition to stories about divorce, throughout the period and into the turn of the century, there are numerous stories about and interviews with actresses about retirement after marriage and return to theatre work after retirement, usually connected to the expectation of a woman's retirement from the stage after marriage. Throughout the century, as table III.2 shows, most of the women in the database who married remained in the profession as performers. The percentage of women continuing to work during marriage never dipped below 65%. In fact, until the decade before the Civil War, *none* of the women in the database retired upon marriage; they all continued performing. However, eight women out of 33, or 24% of performing women who married during the 1850s, did retire at marriage. Significantly, only one of them came from a family in which women were raised not to work.

Sisters Eliza, Celia, and Olive Logan were three of the eight retirees, all daughters of performing parents. Of the three, Eliza married theatre manager George Woods and continued in the business as a member of the management team; Olive, who had left the theatre before her first marriage, returned to acting after the marriage ended, and later became a playwright and lecturer; and Celia became a playwright and lecturer as well.²⁸⁰ They stopped acting, but did not leave the field. Clara Barry, as we have seen, returned to the stage when her husband became ill. Louisa Eldridge, whose antecedents are cloudy, resumed performing when her husband had financial difficulties.²⁸¹ And Mary Taylor, the original Bowery G'hal Lize, retired at the age of

²⁸⁰ Roberts, "Logan, Olive," ; "Mrs. Celia Logan Connelly is Dead," *NYDM*, 2 July 1904, 13. "The Dramatic Calendar: 18 August 1829. Eliza Logan," unidentified clipping in Eliza Logan clipping file, BRTC. One of their brothers became an attorney, the other a physician and diplomat. The family seems to have been focussed on assimilating into the professional classes. See Roberts, "Logan, Olive."

²⁸¹ "Louisa Eldridge," *NYDM*, 2 January 1897, *Mirror Interview* in Robinson-Locke scrapbook BRTC.

Table III.2: Post-marriage career choices

<i>Marriage Decade</i>	<i>Total marriages</i>	<i>% continued working</i>	<i>% retired on marriage</i>	<i>% retired then returned to work</i>	<i>Total % retired on marriage</i>	<i>% entered theatre after the marriage</i>	<i>% retired before marriage recorded</i>	<i>% no info avail.</i>
before 1820	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1820s	1	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1830s	13	92%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%
1840s	19	89%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%
1850s	33	70%	18%	6%	24%	6%	0%	0%
1860s	56	79%	9%	5%	14%	5%	2%	0%
1870s	57	65%	7%	7%	14%	9%	7%	5%
1880s	102	66%	14%	8%	22%	6%	2%	5%
1890s	99	72%	13%	7%	20%	3%	2%	3%
1900s	58	66%	19%	7%	26%	2%	3%	3%
1910s	24	79%	17%	0%	17%	0%	4%	0%
1920s	9	44%	22%	0%	22%	11%	22%	0%
1930s	4	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
No wedding date	256	64%	5%	3%	8%	3%	2%	23%
Totals:	731	69%	10%	5%	15%	4%	3%	10%

twenty-five after a career of either twelve or eighteen years, and went to live in Albany.²⁸² Her antecedents are unknown, but as she started so young, if she was not from a theatrical family, she probably went on stage to support herself. Gertrude Dawes, who had begun her career as a dancer at theatres such as the Bowery, the National, and the Chatham, married a man who had made his fortune in California.²⁸³ Only Anna Cora Mowatt, who had entered the business to save her husband, came from a family in which women were brought up not to work. She retired upon her second marriage to William Foushee Ritchie, editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*.²⁸⁴ Retirement upon marriage for this generation of performers cannot, therefore, be attributed to coming from a non-theatrical professional or middle-class family background. It is possible, however, that this rash of retirements is related to the development of domestic ideology. Within the group of

²⁸² "G.G.M.," *NYT*, 26 November 1885, clipping in Edward Ditmar scrapbook, vol. 1, BRTC. This brief article states she went on stage at Burton's in 1832, when she would have been 7; George Templeton Strong stated she debuted at Burton's at the age of 12, in 1838. See Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Musical Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, 1850-1856*, vol. 2, *Reverberations* (1995), 314-315.

²⁸³ "Gertrude Dawes," *NYDM*, 2 July 1892, 6.

²⁸⁴ Robinson, 681.

female advice manuals and articles analyzed by Barbara Welter, giving rise to her theory of True Womanhood, sixty-seven were published between 1830, when Mowatt, the oldest of these retiring women was 21, and 1849, when the youngest, Olive Logan, was ten. A further twenty-eight were published during the 1850s.²⁸⁵ These women grew up during the period in which domestic ideology was developing and circulating as the primary ideal of womanhood for women of almost all backgrounds, as discussed in Chapter One, and this ideal included remaining in the home. It would not be surprising that some young women coming into adulthood during this period would attempt to measure up to this ideal and retire into marriage.

Although the proportion of women retiring upon marriage dropped during the 1860s and 1870s, the expectation of retirement upon marriage continued, even within the theatrical press. By the 1880s, the lack of retirement upon marriage had begun to be something for press writers to remark upon, even though the overwhelming majority of female performers did not retire when they married.

There were two major themes in the press coverage of this subject, the cautionary tale and the fascinations of the stage. Cautionary tales, particularly popular in the early 1880s, centered on women who had married out of the profession. Minnie Cummings' married life "was but the repetition of the lives of all women who marry with those who are not in sympathy with the profession." He became jealous of her, and "a charitable act, which through the darkness and storm of a winter's night she walked alone to perform for a fellow-creature dying of consump-

²⁸⁵ Welter. In fn.2, p. 151, Welter states that she has consulted "almost all of the women's magazines published for more than three years during the period 1820-1860" plus all gift books she could find in both major and less well-known archival collections, along with "the large collection of ... cookbooks in the New York Public Library and the Academy of Medicine of New York." She also consulted popular novels written by women. A tally of all sources she cites therefore can be considered representative, not only of the type of literature being produced, but of the time periods in which the majority were published.

tion, became the groundwork” for a charge of infidelity.²⁸⁶ Women who married out of the profession might find their husbands unreasonably jealous, this article warns, and themselves on the defensive side of a divorce suit. Marrying out of the profession might even lead to murder, instead of divorce: “Two years ago Lizzie McCaull forsook the stage, and married a gentleman engaged in the practice of law. Last Sunday she shot her husband; to-day he is dying, and she is in prison.... The story of her domestic troubles grows out of jealousy.” According to this story, in the heat of a quarrel and “without a word of warning,” Lizzie grabbed the gun that was lying on a table and shot him. Here is the wild actress *untamed*, a particular danger to those men living the life of the “sporting” culture, who were “familiar figure[s] in the theatre lobbies,” as Lizzie’s husband had been. And women of the theatre are warned that marrying “out of the profession” could turn them into murderers. “Lizzie McCaull's rash act will be deeply deplored by those who knew her,” moralized the *New York Dramatic Mirror*. “It is another argument against actresses marrying into ‘society,’ retiring only to chafe and fret for a return to the fascinations of theatrical life.”²⁸⁷

“The fascinations of theatrical life” and the reasons women refused to leave the stage after marriage, or unaccountably returned to the theatre after retirement, became a major topic of discussion during the last decade of the century. Sometimes these “fascinations” were blamed for the breakup of a non-theatrical marriage. Laura Don and her photographer husband were married in Troy, New York, in 1870, and “for a time they spent a happy domesticity, she assisting him at his business,” said her 1886 obituary. “Yet she was not contented. The stage had fascinated her. He protested against her adoption of it, but her iron will would not give way. It was then agreed

²⁸⁶ John Carboy, "Theatrical Reminiscences. Minnie Cummings," *Philadelphia Sunday Transcript*, 25 July 1880, clipping in Robinson-Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

²⁸⁷ "Lizzie McCaull in Trouble."; "Lizzie McCaull," *NYDM*, 4 March 1882. Ms. McCall was eventually exonerated, and then attempted to re-enter the profession. See "McCall."

by the two that they should be separated by the law.” As was the case in 66% of divorces, she was the one who filed for and received the divorce. Although she married again, within the profession, when she died of consumption, her first husband was at her side, according to the sentimental obituary in the *New York Clipper*.²⁸⁸ The reader is led to understand that the first marriage, in which she was the domesticated assistant to her husband, was the true one, interrupted by the fascinating theatrical career which killed her.

Marion Manola entered the profession with her husband, Henry S. Mould, when his business went bust in 1883. Although Mould (stage name Carl Irving) never became more than a chorus singer, Manola became a light opera star, appearing for a long run at the Casino and then with several high-status touring companies. In 1888, Irving/Mould retired and went back into business. “He wished his wife to retire as well,” says the author of this profile, “but she had become so devoted to her profession that she refused to do so and accepted a leading part in the ‘May Queen.’ Two years ago Mrs. Mould obtained a divorce from her husband.”²⁸⁹ In this story, a young wife, once introduced to theatrical life, actually refused to follow her husband back to “society.”

Only 32 women, or 4% of women in the database who married, entered the theatre after their first marriage, like Laura Don and Marion Manola. Most of the stories of the “fascinations of theatrical life” were constructed around professional women returning to work after retiring into marriage, or refusing to leave the stage at all, like Manola. In 1880, when Maude Granger married Albert Follin, nephew of Frank Leslie of *Leslie’s Illustrated News*, the announcement stated that “she is not planning to leave the stage, though her husband is said to be anxious that she should.” The reason given for his anxiety was that her health was poor, but her divorce just a

²⁸⁸ “Death of Laura Don,” *Clipper*, 20 February 1886, 769.

²⁸⁹ “Our Gallery of Players: Marion Manola,” *Illustrated American*, 26 September 1891, clipping from magazine, in Marion Manola clippings file, BRTC.

year or so later suggests she may simply have wished to continue her career.²⁹⁰ The 1880 interview with Minnie Cummings quoted previously also sounds as though it is part of an ongoing discussion. “The husband of an actress, who is not an actor himself, is invariably jealous, ... Generally he is too poor in purse to take her off the stage,” Cummings begins, and refers at the end to “the scandals arising from such unions.” Miss Cummings in this article blames both parties for marital break-ups, the men for jealousy, the women for “obstinacy” in refusing to leave the stage and live within the means of the husband.²⁹¹ Nevertheless, it is clear that there have been several such “scandals,” and the question has been raised regarding the reasons married women remained on or returned to the stage.

In 1887, when actress Julia Daly died, her obituary stated that, “in 1863 Miss Daly married Warren P. Edgerton, and at his earnest wish retired from the stage. In 1869 on visiting Europe the lady without premeditation accepted several engagements.” What happened after her lack of premeditation is not discussed, but “her last appearance was at the Grand Opera House, St. Louis, for the benefit of the sufferers of the Southern Hotel fire,” which was in 1877.²⁹² Her apparently precipitate return to the stage does not appear to have occasioned much discussion when it occurred. But by 1887, the story was press-worthy and was interpreted as another unaccountable decision on the part of the woman. On a whim, as far as the obituary writer could determine, Miss Daly left her marriage and returned to the profession.

It is not until the 1890s, however, that the fascination of the stage and the refusal of women to retire or remain in retirement after marriage really begins to be presented as a serious

²⁹⁰ “Maude Granger’s Marriage,” 1880, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC; “Individualities,” *Music and Drama*, 21 October 1882, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC.

²⁹¹ Carboy, John. “Theatrical Reminiscences: Minnie Cummings,” *Philadelphia Sunday Transcript*, 25 July 1880, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

²⁹² “Julia Daly’s Career,” *NYDM*, 1 October 1887, 6; “General Telegraph News; The Hotel Disaster in St. Louis,” *NYT*, 20 April, 1877, 5, ProQuest.

problem. In 1891, the story entitled “The Little Woman” appeared on The Woman’s Page of the *New York Dramatic Mirror*.²⁹³ In this story, by the pseudonymous “Victorine,” the actress who had “commenced at the bottom of the ladder, as her mother had done before her” and eventually graduated to “responsible business,” marries a man who wishes her to retire. They come to an agreement that she will retire for a year and “at the end of that time if she felt she could not be happy away from the glare of the footlights, he would withdraw his objections to her appearing in public; and with his free consent, she was to return to the boards.” So she does retire and her days become confined to keeping house in the flat, and to serving her husband:

All day long she worked, sweeping, dusting, studying cook books to find some new dainty with which to please the palate of her lord; brushing his clothes, mending his socks, and then as evening came on she would kneel by the open window and watch for his return. After dinner they would sit down, and while he read aloud, she would sew for the little stranger that was expected.

As far as the author of this story is concerned, this is all as it should be. She has the baby and is happy in her motherhood, but then the baby dies. While the father sobs his heart out, she, perhaps ominously, cannot cry. Possibly the reader is meant to infer that her constant emoting as an actress has deadened her real feelings.

Her husband then gets a promotion at his job and they are able to have a servant to take care of the flat. She is bored. She goes for a walk and meets an old friend, “one who had been the leading lady of the company she had played with last.” The next day, “when she was alone, she read Shakespeare and the next, she acted a few scenes in front of the mirror.” Soon, the fascination of the stage reasserts itself, and she begins to “pine” for a return to her career. She finally tells her husband, and he agrees that ““You have been a good little woman to give up your hopes and ambitions so long for me, and I haven't forgotten our agreement. Try it for a season,

²⁹³ Victorine, 6-7.

little wife, and if you find it is not quite the same now, come home; you will find me here waiting for you.” That night in bed, she hears him sigh, and this annoys her:

Why should he sigh? Had they not made an agreement? Had she not done more than kept her part? Why must she lay down the hopes and ambitions of her whole life? Was he not selfish to expect it? Yes, he was selfish! *Selfish!* and she would *not* yield to it. He had no right to expect it. She would succeed, and be a great actress: managers would vie with each other in offering her splendid inducements, and in two or three years she would be a star, and he could travel with her; he liked traveling. Yes, in two -- or -- three -- years!!

As the passage is constructed, one can almost hear the woman childishly stamp her foot in thinking she “would *not* yield.” Her expectation that he would give up his own career to travel with her might have been read by members of a nontheatrical audience, or possibly even male members of a theatrical audience, to indicate the topsy-turvy nature of the theatre business, in which, when the woman is star, the nontheatrical husband is an emasculated appendage. An 1898 article about Amelia Bingham describes the position of a leading woman’s husband as:

... a nonentity, ... held up to opprobrium, ridicule and scornful jest. The lady usually refers to him flippantly as her ‘excess baggage,’ and his most useful mission in life is to linger at the old stage door and carry home the satchel. ... [A]s a rule the stage husband ... goes through life crushed and subdued by a realizing sense of his own abject inferiority and loss of identity.²⁹⁴

Nothing of this sort is stated within this story; it may have been too common an inference to need further explication. But the placement of this story on the Woman’s Page of the *Dramatic Mirror* means the audience for the story is assumed to be the foot-stamping, unyielding woman herself. Therefore, the writer attempts to soften the heart of the reader by asking her to empathize with the soon-to-be abandoned, rather than emasculated, husband: “What is to become of him” during the wife’s two or three years’ absence? “What had this true heart at her side done, that he should be robbed of all he held dear? What right has she to leave him to all the temptations of a single life? How could she take from him his only comfort?” In the end, of course, she stays. “Does she

²⁹⁴ “New Use for Stage Husbands,” *Telegraph*, 1 June 1898, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, vol. 70.

never regret?” asks the author? “Who knows?” is the reply. “She never mentions her old aims and ambitions now, but with a brave smile, she says: ‘I love the stage, but then, you see, he cannot spare me.’”

There are several competing critiques being made within this story: There is an implied critique of the domestic ideal of middle-class marriage as an institution of boredom for women. The only remedy offered for this, however, is the prescription that the Little Woman devote herself entirely to her house and husband, turning in on herself in a form of self-martyrdom or even self-abnegation that makes her the secret star of her own life. Although the story appears in a trade paper specifically for performers, male and female, career ambition on the part of a woman is attributed to mere boredom and/or the lure or “fascination of theatrical life,” as represented by the leading lady the Little Woman meets, and her inability to stop herself from performing Shakespeare in front of the mirror. And again, although the business of an acting career requires women to make legal contracts with men, this story argues that a woman who expects her husband (and by extension any man) to adhere to the terms of a contract or bargain (with or without an exclusivity clause), is childish and selfish. In step with the legal developments described by Lea VanderVelde, the Little Woman cannot, and in this story is told she *should not*, expect a man to uphold his end of a contract with her, for the simple reason that she *is* a woman, and therefore has no right to career ambitions separate from her husband’s. As in the decision in *Smith v. Daly*, the idea that the actress might have a right to a career independent of the manager, or in this case the husband, is considered “preposterous.”²⁹⁵

The writer is so patronizing to “The Little Woman,” and the author’s name, “Victorine,” so clearly represents a victory over the Little Woman’s “selfishness” in wanting to pursue a career within her marriage that it is difficult to believe the story was actually written by a

²⁹⁵ See VanderVelde: 810.

woman, much less a woman of the theatre, as contributors to the Woman's Page might be expected to be. But whether written by a man or a woman, the story indicates a concern, not simply about women choosing a return to the stage after retirement, but about women who justify such actions by appropriating the "male" arguments of business and bargaining to themselves. The Little Woman has held her husband to his agreement, and he has complied, but his sigh indicates he does not think he should have to, and the author agrees. The double standard with regard to the validity of a woman's career is recognized by the main character, and she rebels against it. The *complaint* about it is recognized by the author, but the complaint is not held valid by the author, any more than Fanny Morant's concern with her career was held valid by the judge in her lawsuit.

Discomfort with the idea of women continuing to work after marriage, particularly after marriage outside of the profession, is reflected in marriage announcements as well as announcements of divorce. In September 1892, the marriages of Minnie Seligman and Minna Gale caused a sensation. Although each of them married wealthy men of standing within "society," neither of them intended to retire! In fact, Minnie Seligman's new husband, Robert Livingston Cutting, Jr., scion of an elite family, "breaking loose from the traditions and prejudices of his *caste*," reported the *Illustrated American*, "has linked his fortunes with those of his charming wife, and will appear with her during an approaching starring tour." And Minna Gale, who married Archibald Cushman Haynes, "manager of the metropolitan department of the Equitable Life Assurance Society," planned to use her new husband's wealth to bankroll a starring tour. The *Illustrated American* reported these marriages together in both the weekly and the monthly editions of the magazine. Of the two, Minnie Seligman's arrangements were the more acceptable. Her husband was known as a serious amateur, and "the manner, rather than the

fact of his entrance upon a professional career, created surprise," the publication assured its readers. Seligman, described as an actress of "fresh and sterling worth," as well as a woman of "bold, almost crude personality," is described in almost masculine terms as "hewing a way to theatrical glory, through the path of difficulties which only rare genius can successfully overcome."²⁹⁶ The combination of her perceived talent and her husband's eagerness to join her in her career appear to have made the topsy-turvy world of female stardom and male followers acceptable, even laudable, to the writer.

Miss Gale, on the other hand, is presented as a mediocre talent that is nevertheless somehow out of control. Not only has she "made arrangements for a Thespian career much more ambitious than she had previously contemplated," but "the firm of Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau, the impresarios of the Metropolitan Opera House, have been paid over \$2,000, merely to lend their potent names to Miss Gale's starring venture." These highly experienced theatrical producers have apparently been snookered—by whom it is not stated. Her husband seems to have no role, neither protesting her continued performing nor jumping in to manage her career. Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau, who might be expected to provide their wisdom and assistance, have been sidelined, according to this writer. The invisible manager, therefore, must be Gale herself, but she is described as "without any particularly winning, or even strong personality, with little or none of the divine fire that distinguishes genius from talent." There is something very unstable about the situation from the writer's point of view. It is not surprising that both women are said to be "tak[ing] up matrimony as a sort of side issue," rather than the career it is supposed to be.²⁹⁷ The writer really does not know what to make of these marriages.

²⁹⁶ "Cupid and Thespis," *Illustrated American*, 24 September 1892, 227.

²⁹⁷ "Cupid and Thespis."

By the time the October issue of the *Monthly Illustrated American* was published, the writer or the magazine's editor had had a chance to think, but the result was further confusion. The lead story is again the Seligman-Cutting marriage. Her previous "unsuccessful matrimonial experiment," precursor to her going on stage, is foregrounded. Seligman is now described as "a vivacious and handsome, but by no means remarkable actress," and her husband as "still very young," a member of several "swell clubs" about town and as "neither brilliant nor ambitious." Neither of them is of particular interest in themselves, this writer seems to be saying, although she is older and more experienced than he. The writer uses this marriage as an excuse to sermonize upon the appropriateness of retirement for women marrying out of the profession:

Every good woman, whether she has drunk deep of public adulation or no, entertains a secret yearning for a home. If it is possible to combine the two, as in the case of Mrs. Kendal, who married one of her own craft, there is no great matter to decide; but, as a rule, men of position who marry greenroom beauties, do so upon condition that the stage is finally abandoned. Sometimes, surrendering the exhilarating life the actress leads causes a struggle; but Cupid is accustomed to conquer, and, one after another, these lovely stars fade within the glittering circlet of a wedding ring.²⁹⁸

It is noteworthy that by this time, a woman may be considered a "good woman" even if she is an actress. The fascination of the stage is here defined as the "public adulation" received by those women who become stars or are recognized as "greenroom beauties" living an "exhilarating life." These women are pictured as hesitating between the adulation of thousands and the attentions of one (wealthy) man.

Seligman is nevertheless excused again, and in the exact same words, because "the manner, rather than the fact of [her husband's] entrance upon a professional career, created surprise." As a couple, they can now be put into the professional theatrical category. Minna Gale, on the other hand, has become quite a different character.

²⁹⁸ "Cupid and the Footlights," *Monthly Illustrated American*, October 1892, full page in Minnie Seligman clipping file, BRTC.

Miss Minna Gale, who was married a few weeks since to Archibald Cushman Haynes, ... has, as usual, decided for herself, and passed over the many scruples of managers who declare that the market value of an attractive actress is seriously injured when she is known as a matron behind the scenes.

From the mysteriously veiled non-power behind the scenes, she has become willful and headstrong, a foolish woman who does not recognize the depreciation of her market value that the weighty word “matron” carries with it (as opposed to Mrs. Kendal’s “married” perhaps). It is quite unclear whether the “as usual” refers to Miss Gale herself, previously so lacking in personality and fire, or to those women who continue to perform after marriage, and do not heed society’s customs and the declarations of the experts in the field, the (presumably male) managers. The flip-flop commentary on both these women indicates both a wish to define and therefore contain them, and a frustrating inability to do so on the part of the writer or writers, who feel themselves losing their footing as shifting gender norms bear in upon them.

This confused reaction to women who would not stay retired (or married) continued through much of the last decade of the century. In 1894, Delia Stacey returned to Charles Frohman’s management after a brief marriage about which she must have had reservations to begin with. “She is called Miss Stacey in this story because she never really gave up her maiden name, and has never been known as Mrs. Burchell,” says the reporter of her return, apparently confused about the woman’s status. An 1898 photograph in an unidentified magazine is identified as Queenie Vassar, “the little singing comedienne whose husband wants her to leave the stage for the quieter ways of domesticity. But she won't so there!” With the author’s “so there!” the willful, foot-stamping, child woman makes a reappearance.²⁹⁹

In 1899, an announcement of Beatrice Moreland’s separation from a husband of five years, previously unknown to the press (or her family) explains:

²⁹⁹ “Queenie Vassar,” n.d. 1898, caption under photos in Locke envelope, BRTC.

Her repugnance to her husband is not due to any apparent cause. . . . There was no rupture. It was simply a case of the old fascination of the stage asserting itself, and when she found that she did not love her husband better than her career, she went back to her first love.³⁰⁰

Moreland herself is quoted as saying, that “Mr. Sylvester is a very charming and estimable man, but I find that my hasty marriage was a mistake, and for that reason I have not announced it before.”³⁰¹ The reporter prefers the “fascination of the stage” reasserting itself to the eminently adult and independent reason for the breakup given by Moreland. Reflecting the divorce laws of New York State as discussed above, it is worth noting that Moreland’s husband, although considering this a final separation, refused to give her an absolute divorce, thus making it impossible for her to remarry, should she wish to. He could not stop her from breaking the marriage contract, but he could prevent her from contracting with anyone else.

And late in the century, Sydney Cowell, daughter of a theatrical family and wife of Oliver Wendell Holmes’ nephew Randall, is complimented on her ability to “concoct a marvelous salad” and keep “an immaculate ironing board tied up in a bag for laundry purposes.” These accomplishments “[go] to show that home keeping rather than fame seeking is her present vocation.”³⁰² The pursuit of fame alone is assumed to be the reason women work as actresses, and the only reason why they would return to work after marriage. Women who continued to work or returned to work after marrying a non-theatrical man were consistently characterized as willful, selfish, childish, fond of fame and adulation, and unable to resist the “fascinations of the stage.” Not until the turn of the century were actresses given the space in the popular press to explain why it was they so often chose to return to work after marrying into retirement.

³⁰⁰ “Beatrice Moreland Is Mrs. Sylvester,” *N.Y. Telegraph*, 16 April 1899, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC.

³⁰¹ “Beatrice Moreland Is Mrs. Sylvester.”

³⁰² “Women Worth Knowing,” n.d., clipping from unidentified newspaper in Sydney Cowell clippings file, BRTC.

When asked in 1902 “why there are so many unhappy marriages in the theatrical profession,” Amy Lee, daughter of Rosina Shaw and Harry Watkins, both well-respected troupers, gave a three-part answer. She first blamed the public for preferring stories of “animosity;” and then blamed managers for refusing to hire married couples, a charge she repeated later in her career. But she ended by saying:

the professional woman is more independent than many other married women. She has a means of self-support always at command, and if she is unhappily wedded she does not have to remain dependent, but can set afoot to find happiness, or at least peace and comfort, through her own efforts elsewhere.³⁰³

Finally, the strength of the “fascinations of theatrical life” as a trope may be seen in a 1904 article by none other than Minnie Seligman. This full-page article features an illustration of a large dramatic mask into which a woman is eagerly stepping – rather like a medieval sinner entering a hell mouth. The headline reads: “Fascination of the Stage: The Real Reason Why Actresses Who Marry and Leave the Stage Return Again, Like Mrs. Le Roy Jones, to the Footlights.” The subhead continues: “Explained by Mrs. Minnie Seligman Cutting, who married one of New York's ‘400,’ left her fashionable home and returned to the profession.”³⁰⁴ It is likely Seligman was contacted by the newspaper. Her now ex-husband Robert Livingston Cutting, Jr. had not, after all, embraced theatrical life, but had returned to his *caste*. He acted as spokesperson for Mr. H. LeRoy Jones during the ten-day search for his escaped wife. Mrs. Jones had disappeared from her seat in the stands at the races when her husband and Mr. Cutting had left her to go down to the viewing paddock. Her disappearance was followed in the newspapers until she was found in a West 22nd Street boarding house by her husband and Cutting. A member

³⁰³ [Amy Lee], 2 September 1902, clipping in Robinson Locke envelope, BRTC; Ida B. Cole, “Obesity Has no Terrors for Actress-Namesake of Hero,” *St. Louis Star*, 23 October 1908, clipping in Robinson Locke envelope, BRTC.

³⁰⁴ Mrs. Robert L. (Minnie Seligman) Cutting, “Fascination of the Stage: The Real Reason Why Actresses Who Marry an Leave the Stage Return Again, Like Mrs. Le Roy Jones, to the Footlights,” [1904], clipping in Minnie Seligman clippings file, BRTC.

of an old New York society family, granddaughter of Mayor Phillip Hone, Margaret Hone had had a brief career on stage under the name of Virginia Paul during and after her second marriage to an actor named Paul Wilkes. The note she sent to her husband on the day of her disappearance stated that she was going to return to acting, and her attempts to procure acting work through her old manager had been reported in the press. Throughout the search for her, and immediately upon her recovery by Jones and Cutting, she had been characterized by Cutting as “insane.”³⁰⁵

“This well known fascination of the footlights is made to account for the present runaway disappearance of Mrs. Le Roy Jones,” wrote Seligman, who had been acquainted with the Joneses during her marriage to Cutting. But, she continues, “Mrs. Jones's conduct is to be accounted for by quite different motives.” There were two reasons, according to Seligman, why actresses might return to the stage rather than remain in a marriage. The first was the character of the men themselves: “Men of the idle class, the class of the rich, are seldom serious about marriage,” wrote Seligman. “It is a matter of pastime or convenience.” She recounted a conversation with her brother-in-law on the subject of marriage. He thought marriage should be contracted among social equals, with a view to posterity. Love, a man could find elsewhere. But as for the woman, he told her: ““Oh, that's quite another matter. The woman is supposed to maintain the virtue and dignity of the family name. Society does not look for virtue in the man.’ If that false idea is inculcated in a boy's mind,” continued Seligman, “how can you look for happiness in married life among the leisure class? There is only one end—the divorce court—and, for women such as I, the stage.”

Women who married into society from the stage, she said, often found themselves abandoned or neglected by their husbands after the marriage, left to amuse themselves.

³⁰⁵ “Mrs. H. LeRoy Jones Disappeared at Races,” *NYT*, 18 May, 1904, 1, ProQuest ; “Missing Mrs. Jones in Theatre Offices?,” *NYT*, 19 May, 1904, 6, ProQuest; “Mrs. H. Leroy Jones Found and Taken Home,” *NYT*, 27 May, 1904, 1, ProQuest.

And such a woman as I am, or as Mrs. Jones probably is—if I am a judge of character—will not submit to such treatment. Her woman's pride rebels and she feels an independence in her ability to support herself. She did so before she was married and she is compelled to return to her professional career.

The “fascination of theatrical life” was nothing more than a woman’s preference for independence, fed by her knowledge that she could support herself, rather than depend for sustenance on a man who had no interest in or respect for her. “How many, many women would, if they could,” she continued, “leave the husbands who are tired of them or are faithless, if they only had a means of independence—some way to earn a living.” That was certainly something most retirees from the stage did have.

Conclusion

The Civil War and the Panic of 1873 both forced and offered the opportunity for women to take responsibility for their own thoughts and actions. As part of this new way of thinking about womanhood, female performers after the Civil War found greater opportunities than ever before for wealth, success, and even stardom. But women’s post-war, post-Panic expectations and ambitions clashed with pre-war societal expectations about female behavior, particularly in regard to their relationships with men. The treatment of female performers through the end of the nineteenth century in business relations, in the institutions of marriage and divorce, and in the press coverage of these, was symptomatic of the grave sense of upset and discomfort with the newer ideas of womanhood beginning to circulate during this period. In a culture in which sex defined a person’s gender, and gender defined a person’s societal role, the marriage contract provided the only model for a legal contract between adult men and women, and it was the only legal contract most women made with men. A woman who moved back and forth between the domestic and the professional spheres destabilized both. To whom did she belong? To which

contract—which relationship—was she to be held? Female performers found themselves battling for control of their careers and talents both legally and in the press, while their concern for professional reputation and ambition for their careers were counted as of little importance. Women who married outside the theatre, particularly those marrying into “society,” often found themselves in an anomalous position: once they retired, they found themselves dependent upon their husbands, but their life experience had also taught them that they could earn their own living. They knew what it meant to be independent and to make decisions for themselves. When these marriages became unsatisfactory, unlike many other women in similar positions, they felt able to leave and take care of themselves. This ability, which many female performers availed themselves of, only confirmed actresses’ reputations for selfish, fame-obsessed behavior in the minds of those who would have preferred women to return to the domestic ideal of the pre-Civil War years.

Women’s emergence as socially responsible individuals did not always work against domestic ideology and the new family industrial model in theatre, however. The next chapter will look at two women who successfully harnessed the newly defined model of socially responsible individual with that of redemptive womanhood to build their careers: Georgia Cayvan, and Louisa Eldridge. The final chapter will consider perhaps the biggest female star of the United States during this period, Fanny Davenport.

CHAPTER FOUR:

REDEMPTIVE WOMANHOOD AS A MODEL FOR A THEATRE CAREER

The last chapter examined how the expectations of female subservience to males within the domestic sphere extended into the business sphere as theatre management became less and less a family-centered small business, and more and more an industry based on a patriarchal management style in which women were expected to remain in subordinate positions. This chapter will examine how two women from different backgrounds negotiated these issues within domestic ideology, along with the changing ideas of women's place, to build successful careers.

The Redemptive Woman in the New Industrial Family: Georgia Cayvan

Georgia Cayvan's speech at the Columbian Exposition of 1893 was perhaps the high point of her career. By this time, she had been the leading lady of the Lyceum Theatre for six years, and in addition to the invitation to speak, she had already been selected as one of the 1,470 women in Frances Willard's and Mary Livermore's biographical dictionary, *A Woman of the Century*, published that year.³⁰⁶ In her speech, Cayvan first positioned theatre as "a popular educator" and its practitioners as redeemers of "men and women who are too worn and weary, perhaps too indifferent and thoughtless, to read for themselves."³⁰⁷ The drama, she stated,

reaches a class of people which the pulpit can not influence the bitter, world-worn, pessimistic men and women, the heartbroken and hopeless, the gay and frivolous, as well as the immoral ... we appeal to their better natures by presenting pictures of true nobility of character.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Frances E. Willard and Mary A Livermore, eds., *A Woman of the Century: Fourteen Hundred Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, (Buffalo, Chicago, New York: Charles Wells Moulton, 1893), 163.

³⁰⁷ Cayvan, 180.

³⁰⁸ Cayvan, 181.

For those audience members not so debased, Cayvan felt the theatre of her time had just as important a role:

It should be the authority on fine points of etiquette, on the truly artistic in dress, on the conventional and correct in social forms and ceremony. In short, it should be the final court of appeal in all that pertains to the accurate and cultured in manners, morals, and speech according to the standards of the time. There are a few theaters where mothers may bring their young daughters, and teachers may send their young pupils, where men may come with their wives and sweethearts, because the play is sure to present the lesson of life wholesomely, and to set a high ideal of manhood and womanhood that is an inspiration to pure living.³⁰⁹

In these two passages, Cayvan positions theatre, and by extension actresses, as redeemers of society, much as clergymen and teachers were positioned, as well as young women such as Jane Addams and Florence Kelley, who were during that period founding and working in settlement houses. If all theatres followed Cayvan's model, it would seem, they might become a cross between a finishing school and a settlement house.

One of these redemptive theatres, clearly (since she worked there), was the Lyceum Theatre. This type of theatre, Miss Cayvan noted, required as performers "women of gentle breeding and broad culture, as well as ... those gifted with great histrionic talent."³¹⁰ Cayvan had put her "broad culture" on display when she went to Japan in 1892, and sent back an extremely detailed description of the exhibitions being prepared under government auspices for the Columbian Exposition.³¹¹ Her descriptions show a lively interest, a deep respect for the artist, and a broad knowledge and understanding of fine artisanship. She was not herself "of gentle breeding." But she carefully cultivated an upper middle-class persona, and her "womanliness" was key to her success with female audiences of the upper tier.

³⁰⁹ Cayvan, 181.

³¹⁰ Cayvan, 182.

³¹¹ "Japan at the World's Fair: Georgia Cayvan Describes Some of the Exhibits to Be Made," *NYT*, 9 October, 1892, 17, ProQuest.

Georgia Cayvan was born on Westport Island in the Kennebec River near Wiscasset, Maine, in 1858. Her father was a lighterman, which was a longshoreman with his own skiff (or lighter) for off-loading vessels. When Georgia was quite young, the family moved south to Bath, Maine, where her mother is said to have run a candy and cigar store on "Candy Row."³¹² The family does not show up in U.S. census records of 1860 or 1870 in either Maine or Massachusetts. However, her father, William T. Cayvan, was assessed for excise taxes of \$15 in 1865, when he was listed as a retail liquor dealer, and again for two dollars in May, 1866 for a piano.³¹³ Perhaps at this time he was running a bar. Soon after this, he is said to have gone to sea, never returning home, and the rest of the family moved to Boston where Georgia continued her schooling.³¹⁴

Very little information was published about her background until she had been playing upper-crust women at the Lyceum Theatre for several years. By this time she had gained a major following among the portion of the female audience that belonged to or identified with the professional and upper middle-class segment of society. That she had been the sole support of her family since her teens was known; but as we have seen, such a reason for entering theatre was an old one, and accepted. Biographical information during this period was limited to her Maine birth, her graduation from the Boston School of Oratory, her performance as Hebe in the Boston Theatre's production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and Steele MacKaye's subsequent invitation to join the cast of *Hazel Kirke*. Much is made of her elocution lessons and her beginnings as a lyceum reader.³¹⁵ The attempt is to paint her as an educated and responsible woman of refined

³¹² "The Maid from Maine," *Bath Independent*, 17 August 1901.

³¹³ Cayvan, William T., *U.S. IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862-1918* [database on-line]. Ancestry.com, 2008. (29 April 2009). Original data: National Archives (NARA) microfilm series: M770 Roll 5, District 2; Annual and Special Lists, 1863-1866; M770 Roll 6, District 2; Monthly Lists, Jul 1864-Dec 1866.

³¹⁴ "The Maid from Maine."

³¹⁵ Willard and Livermore, eds., 163; see also "Our Gallery of Players. Georgia Cayvan," *Illustrated American*, 29 August 1891, clipping in scrapbook, BRTC.

sensibilities, in contrast to the whimsical young women so often found in the entertainment pages.

In the twenty-first century, we are used to performers of all genders speaking out on issues from world peace to labor practices to the environment. Albert Auster has described the suffragist activities of Mary Shaw, Lillian Russell, and Ethel Barrymore, all Cayvan's contemporaries, after the turn of the twentieth century.³¹⁶ Georgia Cayvan used the newly-found freedom of women after the Civil War to speak out publicly and often on issues that she felt important to her profession in her time. From the time she first became newsworthy in 1888, when the Lyceum Theatre Stock Company returned in glory from its first national tour, her great care was to present herself and the theatrical profession in the most laudable light. Anti-theatrical prejudice, particularly with regard to women, remained strong during this period, and seems during the 1880s to have become more publicly discussed than it had been during the previous several decades. In 1882, actress Celia Logan (sister of Eliza and Olive) had been rejected by "a well-known firm who speculate in ... moral and improving entertainment"—a lecture bureau — because, in the words of the *Mirror*, "Miss Logan actually tried to make it appear that a woman could be an actress and a lady at the same time; that the stage door did not shut out morality, and that virtue was to be found behind as well as before the footlights."³¹⁷ In 1887, the pastor of a Nashville Baptist church preached to his congregation on the "vicious" tendencies of performers and playwrights and intimated that because of this, those attending the performances of Emma Abbott's popular English opera company in town that week would have to choose between church membership and theatre attendance. Unbeknownst to this pastor, Miss Abbott was in the congregation, and immediately after he had finished his sermon, stood up to refute the slurs upon

³¹⁶ See Auster.

³¹⁷ [Untitled], *Music and Drama*, 21 October 1882, clipping in Celia Logan clippings file, BRTC.

the profession generally and on herself and her company in particular. The incident made news not just in Nashville, but also in the *New York Times*.³¹⁸

Beginning with her interview given on return from the Lyceum tour, therefore, Cayvan made sure her growing audience understood her position as a “lady” within her profession, and the opportunities for educational experiences that a career in theatre offered. Her goals for herself while on tour had been entirely within this purview. “I determined to see something as well as to work,” she told the *Times*, “and I acted up to my programme”:

Why one Sunday morning in San Francisco I rose early after working late and took a trip of 125 miles to Monterey, returning by 7 o'clock Monday evening—just in time to get ready for the performance. That is the way I made use of my spare time...I have brought back facts enough to write several books if I were in the book-writing business, and I have treasured up lots of statistics about the Pacific coast and our Western cities.³¹⁹

Cayvan’s reference to rising early after working late positions her in direct contrast to the image of actress as quasi-prostitute discussed in Chapter Two. Her declaration that she rose early after working late, and returned from California with “facts enough to write several books” is a clear message that, like the characters she was playing, she belonged intellectually and by behavior to the professional and business classes, and that theatre as a profession did not of necessity lead to prostitution. She continued to argue for the ideal of the pure, womanly actress from that point on.

At the end of 1890, nearly a full column in the *New York Sun* was devoted to a description of her home. “Miss Georgia Cayvan is demonstrating the fallacy of the traditional theory that professional life disqualifies a woman for domestic duties,” begins this article, which then goes on to prove this by the minute detail in which the interior décor is described. The house shows a “refined subjugation of all impression of mere costliness in the predominant idea of comfort,” the article states early on. In other words, she is no vulgar, *nouveau-riche parvenu*.

³¹⁸ “Plucky Emma Abbott,” *NYT*, 10 October, 1887, 5, ProQuest.

³¹⁹ “Across the Continent: Georgia Cayvan's Story of the Lyceum Tour,” *NYT*, 8 October, 1888, 8, ProQuest.

After a description of why a man would like the house (“none of the bizarre litter with which women delight to crowd their rooms...no footstools to trip the unwary, no...bows on the fire tongs”), the writer turns to why women would like it: “its exquisite womanly atmosphere,...the constant manifestation of consideration for the pleasure and convenience of occupants and guests,” along with specific color schemes and decorative elements. After a lengthy description of the furnishings, including the “wonderful ‘tea corner’ in the parlor” and its accoutrements, and the “wide, deep, broad couch up in the library, where half a dozen girls can cuddle down among the half a dozen pillows and talk it all over together” (as though Cayvan were still a teen, or else was running a girls’ school), the reader is reminded that “the Lyceum’s leading lady” lives with sister and servants “as quietly and cosily as the ordinary woman.” She is described “somewhat reluctantly” leaving the house for work in the evening dressed “in a quiet, dark dress and hat, attended by her maid” where she “thrills with the power and pathos of her dramatic gifts.” The impression given in these last lines is something like that of a nun like female priest leaving her convent under cover to participate for a few hours in a great religious ritual. There is no intimation that Miss Cayvan herself was present during the journalist’s tour of her home.³²⁰ An 1891 profile in the *Illustrated American*’s regular feature, “Our Gallery of Players,” ends by saying that “Miss Cayvan has not yet sought the charms of married life, and when not travelling with the company lives at home with her mother and sister in a prettily furnished flat.” She is presented as living entirely within a chaste, family—not to say wholly feminine—sphere. In these two articles, she is positioned as the epitome of late nineteenth-century upper middle-class womanliness.

In the *Illustrated American* profile, Cayvan is quoted defending the profession against the idea that its temptations might corrupt young women. She states that “Innocent minds are not

³²⁰ “Miss Cayvan's Home in New York City,” *Bath Daily Times* (rpt. from *N.Y. Sun*), 30 December 1890.

easily tempted, ... and I cannot believe that a good girl is in any greater danger upon the stage than she would be if employed as a type-writer or in any other walk of life that women choose.” Further, she declared, “[I]f a girl decides to leave a domestic life and adopt another calling, there is none that will prove so broadening to her mind as will that of the stage. Here people are compelled to study more or less. They travel, they see the world, and have an opportunity of judging human nature as it is.”³²¹ Cayvan’s “programme” of 1888, and her known proclivity for fishing with groups of female friends during the summer months,³²² were living proof of the benefits of an active physical and intellectual life. For young women who wished to “leave a domestic life” and yet perhaps could not afford to enter one of the new women’s colleges, Cayvan seemed to be saying, the theatre offered another avenue for an active intellectual life, and was no danger to a woman’s chastity or womanliness. These issues are no longer the burning issues of our day, and to many may appear unimportant or even retrograde. But by standing up for the theatre as redemptive educator, and female performers as women of gentle breeding and intelligence, Georgia Cayvan was standing up for the concept of the female performer as a professional and adult individual of responsibility, rather than merely a whimsical girl or object of desire.

As her inclusion in Willard and Livermore’s book and her invitation to speak in Chicago demonstrate, Cayvan’s campaign to erase her background and upgrade her image was an immense success with the sector of the audience that mattered most in legitimate theatre, the female audience. The theatrical press often reminded female performers that it was more important to please the female members of the audience than to please the men. Female performers were reminded that they should:

³²¹ "Our Gallery of Players. Georgia Cayvan." 29 August 1891, clipping in scrapbook, NYPL-PA.

³²² "Georgia Cayvan," *NYDM*, 4 August 1883, 2.

always play and dress to please the ladies. If they admire her, the gentlemen will follow; if not, the gentlemen will be afraid to confess their admiration. The actress who tries to please the men only makes a fatal mistake, for two reasons: first, because no gentleman is really pleased with what would offend a lady, and second, because the ladies are really the patrons of our theatres and bring the men in their train.³²³

This warning was usually given to actresses who worked in light opera, particularly at the Casino Theatre, where many if not most of the female stars appeared in tights.³²⁴ But the key point here is the recognized importance of the large proportion of women in these audiences. Georgia Cayvan played to this segment of the audience both on stage and off. At the time of her retirement from the Lyceum, in November of 1894, the *New York Times* said:

She holds a peculiar position among actresses. Admired by the men of her audiences for her thoroughly artistic work, she has made by her womanly personality a following among women which no other actress of the day can claim.³²⁵

The following year, the *Illustrated American* said of her that...“ she possesses a personal magnetism which appears to have given her that place in the hearts of the American people--and especially of the female portion of it which was once occupied by Helena Modjeska.” This is followed up by the statement that she had “gained the prominent position she now occupies not only through her personal magnetism, but also by good, honest, hard work....To-day, although she is in the first rank of dramatic artists, she works almost as hard as she did” when she first began”³²⁶ Georgia Cayvan reflected back to her female audience the image of themselves they wished to see, both idealized on stage, and in “real life.”

³²³ [Marie Jansen], *Spirit*, 20 October 1883, clipping in Locke envelope, BRTC. ; See also "Casino.--The Brazilian," *NYDM*, 7 June 1890, clipping in Locke envelope 560, BRTC.

³²⁴ In the 1883 article above, Marie Jansen is criticized for her too short skirt and reminded of the female audience [Marie Jansen]; In 1898, an artist's model was criticized by actress Josephine Hall for appearing at the Casino apparently nude: Josephine Hall, "Strong Protest Against Clara Betz's Performance at the Casino, by an Actress," *N.Y. World*, 11 September 1898, clipping in Robinson Locke envelope, BRTC.

³²⁵ "Georgia Cayvan Must Rest," *NYT*, 27 November, 1894, 9, ProQuest.

³²⁶ "Our Gallery of Players: Georgia Cayvan," *Illustrated American*, 1895, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

The success of her campaign with regard to her own standing was proven in 1898, two years after she had retired from the stage, when her status as a woman of gentle breeding and upper middle-class respectability was publicly challenged. In December of that year, she was named in the divorce case of Mrs. Oliver Sumner Teall as one of the women with whom Mr. Teall had consorted. Up to this point, Georgia Cayvan's name had never been linked publicly with that of any man on other than a professional basis. In fact, only a few very old acquaintances even knew that she had once, briefly, been unhappily married.³²⁷ Her entire career, she had lived and travelled with her mother and her sister, and was still living with her sister when she was named in the Teall case. Cayvan vindicated herself by testifying in court. Her account of her limited social acquaintance with Teall was supported by him, and according to her obituary, her character "was indorsed [*sic*] by members of Sorosis, all the Women's clubs, Mr. A.M. Palmer, and many others who rallied to her support."³²⁸ She was the first woman in New York State to demand and receive a public apology for defamation of character in a divorce case, an action which was reported to have led to the passage of a bill "for the protection of those whose characters may be assailed in similar circumstances," as the *New York Tribune* described it.³²⁹

Cayvan constructed a public image of herself as representative of the highest ideal of the independent, socially-responsible yet womanly, career woman of the late nineteenth century. She did this by working with, and to a large degree relying upon, the new industrial family model of theatre. Cayvan entered the Frohman brothers' business family early and did extremely well with

³²⁷ "'The Maid from Maine'."

³²⁸ "The Passing of Georgia Cayvan," *NYDM*, 1 December 1906, 15. According to the program for the testimonial benefit given for her in 1903, she was a "member of 'Sorosis,' where she was always lovingly welcomed." Program/Playbill Broadway Theatre, 13 January, 1903,

³²⁹ "Cayvan's Career," *New York Tribune*, rpt. *Bath Daily Times*, 21 November 1906, 2 & 5, clipping in file on Georgia Cayvan, PFL. Originally published in the *New York Tribune*. I have so far been unable to trace the title or date of this bill.

them. As previously noted, she arrived in New York from Boston in February of 1880, having come to the attention of Steele MacKaye and finally accepted an offer from him to play Dolly Dutton, the comic cousin of Hazel Kirke, at the Madison Square Theatre.³³⁰ As discussed in Chapter Three, the Madison Square Theatre, owned by the Mallory Brothers, was soon under the management of Daniel Frohman.

During the early period of her New York career, Cayvan was still trying to maintain an independent career as a reader in the Boston area. Her letters to Effie Ober, her Boston agent, discuss open dates all the way through 1880.³³¹ During the summer of that year, she was clearly coming under pressure from Frohman to sign a long-term contract that would severely impinge on her independent career, and wrote quite desperately to Effie for her help in negotiation as the following post cards and telegram show:

June 10, 1880

If you have not already decided to come on – you'd better do so & fix up my contract for next season. There is a powerful effort being made to induce me to forego the readings.

July 26 (telegram)

“Must settle theatre contract Wednesday Come on immediately need you

July 27

Will you please come on Sunday night next and help me on Monday – I find it necessary to have you – I was obliged to postpone business until I could get you. – GEC³³²

But Effie appears to have let her down. By that time managing her own light opera company, the Boston Ideal Opera Company, as well as continuing as agent for individual musical artists,³³³ she was either unable to come down to New York on Frohman's schedule, or unwilling to step into

³³⁰ "The Passing of Georgia Cayvan."

³³¹ See Georgia Cayvan ALS file, HTC.

³³² All postcards and telegrams above also from Georgia Cayvan ALS file, HTC.

³³³ See Katherine K. Preston, "'Dear Miss Ober': Music Management and the Interconnections of Musical Culture in the United States, 1876-1883," in *European Music and Musicians in New York City, 1840-1900*, ed. John Graziano (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 273-298.

this arena. She finally did get into New York, but an apologetic letter from Cayvan indicates there had been no meeting. “Dear Effie,” she writes

I was sorry that you did not have a long talk with Mr. Frohman our Business manager. He’s a remarkably smart man and a thorough gentleman. He was anxious to talk with you but could not [seem?] like it as the office was full. He liked you very much and wanted to see you about my contracts etc.

Although her Madison Square salary was not much more than a “modest stipend” low enough that she could discuss giving it up with equanimity, Georgia apparently did all right for herself in negotiating for her independent career as a reader, because she continues:

... Be careful about giving prices for next season as I shall be worth more in November than I am now. I must command generally \$100 and I will be able to get it by that time. You’ll see. So be cautious and we’ll both be rich. Good bye. Dolly Dutton³³⁴

In January of 1881, Georgia took over the lead role when the original Hazel Kirke, Effie Ellsler, went out on tour. By September of 1881, Cayvan was again in contract negotiations, this time regarding going out on tour herself. She still felt a reading career was a viable option, and was kicking against the schedule the Frohman brothers had set up, although apparently the salary they were offering had increased substantially: “A couple days more will decide the matter. I am about to throw up my contract and unless they make some compromise will be ready for you at once – so hold on if you can. No salary in this world would induce me to take one night stands.”³³⁵ In January of the following year, she went out on tour with Charles Frohman as advance agent.³³⁶ The January leg of the tour, according to a schedule she sent Ober at the end of 1881, included a week in Boston, one night each in Lowell, Worcester, Newport and New

³³⁴ This is an undated letter in the Georgia Cayvan ALS file. The signature (Dolly Dutton), a discussion about a photograph in this letter and in another, also undated, along with discussion of November-December reading dates, suggest they are both from 1880 and come after the panic of the summer. Other letters indicate that a lead time of a month or six weeks in booking dates was plenty far ahead, so this is unlikely to have been an earlier letter. Kathleen Preston has noted similar timing for Effie’s musical clients. See Preston, 283-284.

³³⁵ Cayvan to E.H. Ober, 13 September 1881, HTC-ALS file; “modest stipend” in Georgia Cayvan to Miss Ober, 11 November 1880, HTC-ALS files.

³³⁶ Marcossion and Frohman, 73.

Bedford, two nights in Providence; one day off; then one night each in Springfield, Holyoke, Hartford, Waterbury, and New Haven—a series of one-night stands with only one break.³³⁷ This schedule is not terribly different from the type of schedules many vocal artists put together, partly on their own and partly with the help of Effie Ober; nor is it remarkably different from the touring schedules Clara Morris, a verified star, followed during that period.³³⁸ The difference was, of course, that the vocal artists that worked through Ober had control of their own schedules, as Morris (or her husband) had control of hers. Cayvan, working for the Frohman industrial family, had to give up control of her schedule, and thus control of her life, in a way that older stars, and artists in other professions, had not yet had to do.

Cayvan remained with the Madison Square Theatre under management of Daniel Frohman until 1882, when, due to her superb elocution,³³⁹ she was cast as Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex* for New York and Boston, a production in which George Riddle, of Harvard University, played the role of Oedipus in Ancient Greek, while the rest of the cast spoke English. According to Daniel Frohman, he was the producer for this, too; he termed it an “outside venture.”³⁴⁰ Whether he became involved because of Cayvan’s involvement, or whether she was cast because of his is not clear. But she was still working for Daniel Frohman. From there Cayvan went to Haverly’s Fourteenth Street Theatre, where she originated the role of Lisa in Bartley Campbell’s *The White Slave* and was in the New York premiere of *The Romany Rye*. But she was still under contract to the Madison Square. Haverly had first employed and then become a good friend of Charles Frohman and according to Dan Frohman, she and the leading man, Augustus Levick,

³³⁷ Georgia Cayvan to "Effie dear", n.d. 1881, HTC-ALS file.

³³⁸ Preston, 283-287; Morris, Diaries. See for instance, entries for December 1883 through January, 1884; March and April 1887.

³³⁹ "Cayvan.," *NYDM*, 24 December 1881. So little was known of her background at this time that the paper stated she had "graduated" from the Madison Square Theatre, and had trained in elocution there.

³⁴⁰ Frohman, 57; Marcossou and Frohman, 46-66, 75.

were on loan to Haverly for the rest of that season.³⁴¹ For the 1882-83 season, she was in San Francisco at the California Theatre, also owned and managed by Haverly. Not until she returned to New York City in the fall of 1883, replacing Sarah Jewett at A.M. Palmer's Union Square Theatre, did Cayvan work as an actress unconnected with the Frohmans or their close associates. By 1884, however, she was back in the Frohman fold as the lead in David Belasco's *May Blossom* and then on tour with his production of *La Belle Russe*. According to Marcossou, Belasco wrote much of *May Blossom* in Charles Frohman's bedroom³⁴², and it was produced by Daniel Frohman at the Madison Square. During the 1886-87 season, Cayvan was again a free agent. She announced that she "would stay in New York and accept jobbing engagements" rather than travel.³⁴³ Perhaps she had heard something about Daniel Frohman's plans, and wanted to make sure she was under his nose as he set up his new theatre company. The next season, she was again under contract to Daniel Frohman at the Lyceum Theatre, where she remained until 1894.

A draft of a letter from Cayvan to Charles Frohman some time in the 1890s, possibly 1893, is the first indication she was no longer happy with her position.

C.F.

The time has come when I want to do something better for myself both artistically and financially, and so I write to you believing that you would favor my purposes so long as you knew that any change I wish to make is in no wise against the interest of your brother. D.F. is willing to pay me more salary to remain in his stock Co. But I have been "stocking it" for a dozen years and I feel cramped at the little parts that fall to my share in a stock company, and hence, I have D.F.'s full consent and approval to try my wings. Al. Hayman said once he would take me. But that is easily said. The chief thing is the play. Your opportunities are wider than his. And so ~~you are the man I want~~ I direct my proposition to you. If you will favor it there are numerous things to consider. The first, that the plan shall be kept absolutely private – from Al H. and everyone. This is D.F.'s special wish as [illegible] of his Lyceum years and the fact that his position in the matter

³⁴¹ Frohman, 54.

³⁴² Marcossou and Frohman, 78.

³⁴³ "Cayvan," *NYDM*, 17 July 1886, 6; "Cayvan," *NYDM*, 15 January 1887, 6.

would not be understood. Send me a [bill?] and then the matter can rest until I see you. D.F. says stocking should be keen until after January 1.³⁴⁴

This letter is enlightening because Cayvan clearly does not want to shake things up. She is not making a play for control; she has requested permission from Dan Frohman to leave the family business, and is now requesting help from brother Charles to be placed at the head of a production as star. At the end of the 1891-92 season, Charles Frohman had succeeded in seducing John Drew away from Augustin Daly's company, and in October opened him in *The Masked Ball* as the star.³⁴⁵ Possibly Cayvan was hoping for a similar enterprise involving herself. "CF" did not take up her proposition. In October of 1894, the *New York Times* asked Cayvan about the rumor that she was going to go on a star tour under Dan Frohman's management.³⁴⁶ A letter with a draft contract from Dan Frohman dated 1894 indicates that they were in negotiations regarding this:

My dear Miss Cayvan If you will take a day for quiet and careful reflection, you will see that the drop option I made you is a very important one to throw over.

If you want to stay, I will see that nothing is done to annoy you.

If you don't want to stay you may tell me so after tomorrow. And then I shall regard your answer as absolutely and irrevocably final. I leave this now entirely in your own hands. Don't throw aside too hastily what is for your own good. Don't consider the Lyceum. Consider your own welfare. D.F.³⁴⁷

The contract was for the remainder of the '93-'94 season on salary, with "N.Y. Theatre Co. to find suitable play for following year and to send out G.C. as a star" at a weekly salary of \$150 plus dresses in New York, and \$250 plus 35% of the profits on the road, with management option for a second and third season.³⁴⁸ While not overly generous, this was in line with star salaries and travel arrangements for those in management-run combination companies at the

³⁴⁴ Georgia Cayvan to "CF" (Charles Frohman), 189_, Harry Ransome Center, Performing Arts. The first three digits of the year are printed on the letterhead, but the year is not filled in.

³⁴⁵ Marcossion and Frohman, 136-140.

³⁴⁶ "Georgia Cayvan About Stars," *NYT*, 15 October, 1894, 3, ProQuest.

³⁴⁷ Daniel Frohman to Georgia Cayvan, 1894, Ransom Center.

³⁴⁸ Frohman to Cayvan, 1894

time, although it was a far cry from the financial rewards (and risks) of such independent female stars as Clara Morris and Fanny Davenport. Included at the end of the contract was the following:

Should either party break this contract thru any cause whatsoever then such party so breaking contract shall acknowledge to the other a sum of 2500 as liquidated damages.

A note at the end states, “the last clause means that the damages of a break of contract can be thus legally estimated.” As we have seen, the tendency at this period was to lock women into exclusive contracts with no consideration given to the woman’s wish to break it. Given the Mallory/Frohman treatment of Rose Coghlan, Effie Ellsler, and Agnes Booth ten years previously and the continuing legal enclosure of female performers in other management arrangements, discussed in the previous chapter, this drop option is remarkable. It places Cayvan on the same footing as her manager. Possibly their long professional relationship had developed Frohman’s respect for Cayvan as a person. Certainly her tireless defense of the actress as respectable woman had aided in placing the Lyceum near the top of the theatrical heap.

Or perhaps Frohman thought she might break down and have to leave. Cayvan had begun having problems with “nervous prostration” as early as 1892.³⁴⁹ Gossipy news reports from entertainment columns indicate that her backstage behavior had been erratic during the 1893-94 season, and the line in the letter, “I’ll see that nothing is done to annoy you,” hints at tensions between Cayvan and other members of the company.³⁵⁰ It is apparent from the Frohman letter that something about the drop option had upset Cayvan, but whether she was upset at the idea that Frohman might cancel the tour, or that she might be unable to complete it is unclear. What

³⁴⁹ “Cayvan,” *NYDM*, 16 April 1892, 2.

³⁵⁰ “Miss Cayvan,” *St. Louis Republic*, 3 June 1894, unidentified clipping in Clippings-Personal--Cayvan, Georgia, HTC; “Cayvan's Tiff,” *Boston Post*, 13 December 1894, clipping in Clippings-Personal-Cayvan, Georgia, HTC. Both these stories lay the blame for her behavior on jealousy of younger, prettier, and less experienced performers, a rationale repeated by Ada Patterson and Victory Bateman in a fictionalized version of Cayvan's end some years later. But these rumors may testify to nervous breakdown or, I believe, to something yet more serious. See Patterson and Bateman, 63-65.

can be drawn from the letter is that Frohman was neither pressuring her to stay nor to leave; he could use her, and would produce her starring tour, but he did not need her. Should she decide to leave, she would be leaving the Frohman organization for good.

It seems that Cayvan did finally sign the contract. At least one story in October, and several news stories in November and December of 1894 stated that she was scheduled to tour as a star the following season under Frohman's management.³⁵¹ However, on November 26th, she retired precipitately from the Lyceum stage. According to some accounts, she had to be ordered off the stage by her physician.³⁵² A trip to see doctors in Paris revealed a tumor that required surgery, for which she returned home to the United States. Cayvan was off the boards from the end of November, 1894, through 1895.

In 1896, no longer under Frohman's management, she attempted a first class starring tour backed by a New England millionaire, according to the *New York Times*.³⁵³ Advertising for the tour announced that:

In the selection of her plays Miss Cayvan has aimed to place herself and her company in a position to appeal successfully to theatre patrons of the best class, and in all the minutiae of staging her productions will be made with a view to meriting the approval of audiences of the most artistic merit and discriminating tastes.³⁵⁴

The announcement of the tour shows Cayvan's continued concern to identify herself and her theatrical endeavors with the highest level of the cultural hierarchy, while the title of her flagship production, *Mary Pennington, Spinster*, shows her concern with women like herself, who had chosen to remain independent. But the tour failed.

³⁵¹ "Georgia Cayvan About Stars"; "Georgia Cayvan Must Rest"; "Cayvan's Tiff."

³⁵² "Georgia Cayvan Must Rest"; "Miss Cayvan's Return," *NYDM*, 8 June 1895.

³⁵³ "Miss Georgia Cayvan Ill; Actress In a Sanitarium for Nervous Prostration—Mental and Physical Collapse," *NYT*, 3 December, 1900, 7, ProQuest.

³⁵⁴ Announcement of starring tour, 1896?, HTC.

Georgia Cayvan had never been considered a great actress. She was a hard worker, and had personal charm. As the leading lady for an industrialized stock company, her presence was but one ingredient in the stage mix, and if Georgia Cayvan was not to the taste of an audience member, he or she had plenty of other performers and characters to choose from. She had been in the position, as she said to the *Times*, “of a foreman in a large mercantile house, who cannot refuse to handle a line of blankets...because he does not like their looks or their feeling, when there is a fortune in them for his employer.” She had played the roles she had been assigned, and played them well, even when she did not like the roles, and even when, as was the case in *The Amazons*, they required her to wear so unwomanly a costume as Knickerbockers. She had never had the opportunity or the responsibility of choosing a play for herself, and never had she had the entire weight of a production on her own shoulders. After so many years playing to the highest status members of the Lyceum audience, simulating their manners and mores, Georgia Cayvan was not in touch with what the audience truly wanted. According to the Testimonial Benefit program, the play had “an auspicious opening, with a notable audience who would have been only too happy to have acclaimed her play; but it was considered weak, far from worthy of her powers...and she, who had always been used to successes, came home broken-hearted.”³⁵⁵ She retired from the stage, and lived privately and undisturbed until the Teall divorce case brought her into the spotlight again.

From 1900, when she went into a sanitarium in Flushing, New York, until and well beyond her death in 1906, biographers have blamed Cayvan’s deterioration into blindness and insanity on the combination of overwork, the operation, the failed tour and the Teall case. This

³⁵⁵ Testimonial Program.

reasoning was repeated as late as 1971, by Edmund Gagey.³⁵⁶ At a loss to understand how this icon of active and self-assured American womanhood could degenerate so quickly and thoroughly, these writers have been able to do no more than return to the idea of the hysterical woman: the woman who, having overstimulated her brain, or overdone her physical activity, has left nothing over for the “work” of menstruation and therefore collapses mentally and physically. This was an argument often used against higher education for women. By 1902, however, the record of women in higher education and the reversal of his position on this subject by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, originally a proponent of the “rest cure,” had robbed the idea of much of its currency.³⁵⁷ But in the case of Georgia Cayvan, overwork and public embarrassment together as the proximate cause of her breakdown was presented as the one explanation consonant with the image of woman she herself had created. Victory Bateman and Ada Patterson in their group of thinly disguised sketches of contemporary actresses, *By the Stage Door*, suggest that she went insane because Dan Frohman’s personal attentions were turning towards a younger actress,³⁵⁸ but there is no evidence to suggest any relationship between Frohman and Cayvan other than that of actress and manager, and really, very few women actually go blind and raving mad just because a man turns his attention elsewhere. The reason for degeneration such as this indeed may have something to do with a man, but abandonment is not the precipitating cause.

³⁵⁶ Edmond M. Gagey, "Cayvan, Georgia Eva," in *Notable American Women, 1607-1950; a Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Edward T. James (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 315.

³⁵⁷ For discussions of overstimulation and its relation to mental and physical breakdown, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936," in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 258-260; Sheila E. Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 35-43; Roberta J. Park, "Physiology and Anatomy Are Destiny!?! Brains, Bodies and Exercise in Nineteenth Century American Thought," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (1991): 37-40, www.la84foundation.org/SportsLibrary/JSH/JSH1991/JSH1801/jsh1801d.pdf; Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 311-312.

³⁵⁸ Patterson and Bateman, 62, 66.

I suggest the constant retelling of the story of Cayvan's end was an attempt on the part of the popular press of her day to come to terms with her death of general paresis. The energetic and athletic woman who never drank, did not attend late suppers, was devoted to her work, lived chastely with her mother and sister and was always accompanied by one of them (or her personal maid)³⁵⁹ died of a disease known to be connected³⁶⁰ to riotous living, usually connected with men. General paresis today is known as one of many symptoms of tertiary syphilis, of which certain types of tumors may also be a symptom.³⁶⁰ Georgia Cayvan's brief, unhappy, and all but unknown marriage in her early years is probably what killed her.

Georgia Cayvan built her career by accommodating herself to the new industrial family model of theatre initiated by Augustin Daly, and developed by the Frohman brothers. As this relationship began to bring her into prominence among the middle- and upper-middle-class audience, particularly the female portion of it, she carefully constructed a public image of herself that fulfilled the highest moral and behavioral demands of domestic ideology. From all reports, this was not just an image; she lived up to it. She also utilized the pulpit provided by the post-war understanding amongst women of their own individual importance and agency to proselytize for issues women in her position felt were the important ones: the redemptive nature of theatre and drama, the educational opportunities it provided young women, and the need for women in her audience to accept and welcome the actress as a respected member of society. She did this without ever denigrating women in the profession that did not fit the role model of actress or of woman she presented herself as being. In return she received the adulation of her female

³⁵⁹ See particularly "Georgia Cayvan Must Rest"; "'The Maid from Maine'"; "Cayvan's Career"; "Mrs. Teall's Divorce Suit: Depositions of Witnesses Heard Yesterday," *NYT*, 17 December, 1898, 2, ProQuest; "Georgia Cayvan," *Bath Times*, 20 November 1906, 2.

³⁶⁰ Luc Jasmin, M.D., Ph.D, "General Paresis," *Medline Plus*, U.S. National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health, 13 February 2008, <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>; Kenneth Wener, M.D., "Gumma," *Medline Plus*, U.S. National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health, 01 November 2007, <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>.

audience and the respect of her male audience. She learned too late that she had not earned the individual stardom that she had wanted. But the principles of domesticity and redemptive womanhood, combined with the newly circulating idea of women as responsible for themselves and to their own beliefs, served her well in building a career of which many women of her time would have been proud.

Creating a Public Character Using Old And New Ideals of Womanhood:

“Aunt” Louisa Eldridge

“Aunt” Louisa Eldridge was a character woman both on and off the stage. With one possible exception, she never made any attempt to become a leading lady or a star of the stage. But within the community of theatre people, she worked indefatigably to become a woman of influence and renown, with success. To do this, she harnessed ideals of womanhood from before as well as after the war, creating a quintessentially nineteenth-century public character who was a startling mix of Benevolent Lady, flag-waving patriot of the Union cause, and a somewhat elderly example of the New Woman.

She began her career as Louisa Jefferson in 1844 at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, where Joseph Jefferson was also playing at that time. Because of the billing confusion, she changed her stage name to Louisa Mortimer. She became best known for her portrayal of Crazy Agnes in W.H. Smith’s *The Drunkard* at in the “lecture hall” of P.T. Barnum’s Philadelphia Museum. She established a good reputation in her line of business, which was “singing chambermaid” or “soubrette.” In 1857 she moved with her family to New York, where she re-created Crazy Agnes at Barnum’s Ann Street Museum, and then played for several seasons at the New Bowery theatre. Women in this line tended to age into the “old woman” line of business if they continued with their career, and “Aunt” Louisa did just that. She weathered

the change from stock company to jobbing and combination tours, although letters soliciting work indicate that at times it was none too easy. But she was respected as First Old Woman, and travelled with Edwin Booth playing such roles as the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* during his 1882 tour, and was with Wallack's Theatre during its closing season.³⁶¹

Like Mrs. Barney Williams and the many other actresses discussed in Chapter Two, by the end of the century, "Aunt" Louisa was laying claim to a higher class background than she was born to. In 1897, she said in an interview for the *Mirror* that her father, William Harwood, had been "a prominent politician" in Philadelphia, where she was born and grew up. She claimed to have been "starstruck" as a child of 10, and so debuted on stage at age 15. "My father was so much opposed to having me go on the stage that he declared he would not allow me to use his name for any such purpose," Mrs. Eldridge stated. After some years, she married D.W. Eldridge, "at the time of our marriage a successful shipping agent," and since "there was no need of my continuing to earn my livelihood as an actress...I retired to private life for five years." Then, "Mr. Eldridge met with reverses in business and, while he was seeking to re-establish himself, I determined to resume professional work."³⁶² In this story, Louisa Eldridge lays claim both to having chosen theatre as a career with the unshakeable resolve of the upper-middle class girl, and to pursuing a theatre career as a redemptive act. This is characteristic of the woman.

Research in the United States census has revealed a rather large instance of re-invention in her story. Louisa Eldridge lived at 142 East 13th Street, New York, in the heavily theatrical residential area just southeast of Union Square, from at least 1870 (the first census to include street addresses) through the end of her life in 1905. She first appeared in the New York City

³⁶¹ "Mrs. Eldridge, 'Aunt Louisa,' Dies, Aged 76 ", *New York Telegram*, 10 December 1905, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC; "Louisa Eldridge."; Eleanor Ruggles, *Prince of Players, Edwin Booth* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1953), 297; Louisa Eldridge to Augustin Daly, 16 February 1888, Folger Shakespeare Library, Augustin Daly Letters and Papers.

³⁶² "Louisa Eldridge," 2 January 1897

census in 1860. According to that census Louisa Eldridge, aged 39, lived with her husband Daniel, a bookkeeper, her two children, Lillie, aged 8 and Preston, aged 5, and a domestic servant aged 15 named Josephine R. Wood. In the 1870 census, Louisa was magically a year younger, at 38, than she had been ten years previously.³⁶³ Lillie, 18, was an actress, and Preston, 16, a “clerk in store,” just like his father, Daniel, aged 55. With them lived Josephine Harwood, age 25, whom numerous newspaper stories and later Aunt Louisa’s own will identify as her devoted younger sister. In 1880, Louisa, age 48, and her husband, now a shipping clerk, were living with Josephine Harwood, age 35, both children having moved out. In the 1900 census, Louisa is said to be 64 years old, although all the obituaries five years later state she was 76. She is not the first or the only actress to lie about her age, although most actresses of the period did not subtract an entire decade or more. But the name of the 15-year old domestic servant “Josephine R. Wood” of 1860 is rather close to the sister, Josephine Harwood, of all subsequent censuses as well as the will. It is possible the enumerator could have mistaken her for a domestic servant, but why be so clear about the middle initial of a domestic servant, unless a point was made of it by someone? “Aunt” Louisa’s age discrepancies through the end of the century raise the question as to who was answering the enumerator’s questions. It would seem to have been “Aunt” Louisa herself. She was probably the one who said Josie was a domestic servant. Was she in fact a servant whom Louisa later called a sister? Or was she a biological sister? And why would Louisa Eldridge try to hide the relationship?

A look at the 1850 census for Philadelphia begins to clarify matters. In that year, the census listed two Louisa Harwoods. One indeed is the daughter of William Harwood, 47, a broker, and his wife Sarah, 45. The ages of the nine children in the house, all surnamed

³⁶³ This is possibly an enumerator’s mistake, although an odd one. Her correct age at this time would have been 31. It is interesting to note that in all the census forms, “Aunt” Louisa’s occupation is given as “keeping house,” and not as “actress.”

Harwood, range from 20 down to one year old and the largest age spread is between the six-year old and the one-year old. There is no Josephine or Josie. There is a Louisa, but she is only 15, six years too young to be the Louisa Harwood Eldridge who died in 1905 at the age of 76. In another area of the city lived Louisa and Josie Harwood. Josie is six years old in 1850, which would tally with an age in 1860 of 15. Louisa is 40, too old to be the actress who started at age 15 in 1844. There are no other people named Harwood living with them. It would appear they are mother and daughter, although relationships between people were not requested in the 1850 census. Because “Aunt” Louisa also used the stage names of Jefferson and Mortimer early in her career, a check was made for those names, too. There is no Louisa Jefferson in Philadelphia in the 1850 census. There is, however, a Louisa Mortimer, aged 19, indicating a birth year of 1831, close enough to the 1829 birth year found in later stories. She is living in the Chestnut Ward in the same hotel as James Hallet, “museum manager.” Since the first theatre Louisa worked at was the Chestnut Street Theatre, this may be the quondam “Aunt” Louisa, but there is no way to be sure. In 1850, no occupational information was requested from women.³⁶⁴ There are no actors or other theatrical personnel listed within ten pages in either direction, which is to say, the neighborhood, but since August in Philadelphia is hotter and more humid than New York in that season, there is not likely to have been much theatrical activity during the census period, so this lack means little. It is probable that the 40-year-old Louisa Harwood living with the six-year old Josie was “Aunt” Louisa’s mother, with whom she no longer lived. It is possible that the 40-year old Louisa Harwood was William Harwood the broker’s mistress, and both Josie and Louisa (Harwood) Mortimer illegitimate. That would at least mean that “Aunt” Louisa’s claim to being his daughter was the truth. The 40-year-old Louisa Harwood could also have been William’s sister-in-law, or even his “fallen” sister. In any case, clearly Louisa Eldridge did not grow up in the comfortable

³⁶⁴ All U.S. census information in this paragraph was found through searching www.Ancestry.com.

upper class or upper-middle class surroundings her 1897 story intimates. She was probably illegitimate, which would provide a rationale for trying to hide the sibling relationship in 1850. Almost as clearly, she probably went into the business for self-support, not just as a choice. In fact, a close reading of that interview shows this to have been the case: after she married Eldridge, “there was no need of my continuing to earn my livelihood as an actress,” she said, which of course indicates that before this, there *was* a need. But like many other women of her generation, the impression she worked to give regarding her background is of upper-middle class comfort and a choice of career.

Such a background and such a career, however, do not explain the reported one thousand people at her 1905 funeral.³⁶⁵ The explanation for that lies in the public character she created for herself within the theatre community.

There is little indication of when Louisa Eldridge became “Aunt” Louisa. However, in 1881, the *Spirit of the Times* suggested that just plain “Louisa” go into business as an agent:

Louisa Eldridge ... is now in great request by operatic managers, who believe that she can turn out a tenor, bring out a baritone, or point out a basso at a moment's notice. She is supposed to know everything about everybody in the dramatic and musical professions, and her tasteful little house is constantly crowded with actors who want engagements and managers who want actors and actresses. Why should not Mrs. Eldridge utilize this knowledge, this confidence, and this popularity by opening an agency? The hard work which she does now out of kindness and good nature would be not less acceptable for regular fees; and many persons, who now decline to consult her, feeling that they have no claims upon her time and attention, would be glad to avail themselves of her experience and tact.³⁶⁶

“The profession,” concludes the *Spirit*, “who have made her an agent in spite of herself, ... would be very glad to recognize her good offices upon a business basis.” However, it would

³⁶⁵ “Aunt Louisa Buried; 1,000 at Funeral,” *New York American*, 12 December 1905, clipping in Robinson-Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

³⁶⁶ “Louisa Eldridge,” *Spirit*, 23 July 1881, clipping in Robertson-Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

appear that this is exactly what Mrs. Eldridge did *not* want to do. Louisa Eldridge played the role of the Benevolent Lady to the profession for most of the rest of her life.

An 1884 article entitled “The Hôtel d’Eldridge” contains the first reference I have found to “Aunt” Louisa. “Probably no one in the profession is as well known and univerrally beloved in New York as Louisa—‘Aunt Louisa,’ as she has been christened,” writes Mary H. Fiske, often also known as the “Giddy Gusher.”

...Brooks, Dickson, and Simmonds and Brown are making a good income out of the agency business. Louisa has an amateur charitable association in active operation from which she does not derive a dollar, but to which she devotes her attention with a spirit devoid of a mercenary attribute.³⁶⁷

Fiske paints a portrait of “Aunt” Louisa’s “agency” which, while obviously exaggerated, gives a good picture of the types of services she extended to hard-up or beginning performers:

A general loan office on a novel basis is connected with this department. ... If Mrs. Greasepaint gets stranded in some mutton-headed company out in Chokedog, Colorado, she wires Aunt Louisa (at Louisa's expense) to send money or a ticket. Managers tumble into the little front room and ask her if she knows a youngish woman or an oldish man, for lovers’ parts, who can start in a hurry, to fill some vacancy in the *Only an Old Pair of Pants* company. Louisa seizes her bonnet and starts. “It will be such a good opportunity for that poor Mrs. Greasepaint” she has just helped on from Colorado....

You go in there one morning and ... [s]he is up to her belt in the recesses of some huge trunk. Piled up about her are bits of red spangled satin, diaphanous gauze skirts, bunches of feathers and past buckles.

“What's this eruption of costume for?” I ask, seeing the embankment.

“Why, poor old Mrs. Greasepaint has been discharged for incompetency, with *Only a Pair of Pants*, and she has a good chance to do the *first* Fairy in *Gorgonzola*, the new spectacular drama, but she has no wardrobe: I'm hunting her something suitable.”...³⁶⁸

There is no list of the actors and actresses she aided, but it is doubtful that many were fired for incompetence, or her recommendations would have ceased to carry any weight rather quickly.

Fiske’s characterization of Aunt Louisa as a dotty old patron of lost theatrical causes is partly for entertainment value, of course, and also fits into the Old Woman line of business that Eldridge

³⁶⁷ Mary H. Fiske, “The Hôtel d’Eldridge,” *NYDM*, 11 October 1884, 7.

³⁶⁸ Fiske.

was by that time well-known for. In addition, it soothes any ruffled feathers of those in the professional agency business by making it appear that “Aunt” Louisa is no threat to them. That numbers of people—women particularly—received help from her “agency” is attested to in the most complete obituary. “Hundreds of women who are successful on the stage to-day owe their starts to the loving kindness and help of Aunt Louisa,” said the *New York Telegram*.

Fiske also portrays “Aunt” Louisa as reliant upon her sister to maintain domestic comforts and fiscal stability:

This hotel can never be seen, nor a description of it ever be written, without a mention of “Joe,” the maiden sister, whose deft hand keeps a continually spread table, whose shrewd business tact grabs enough money from the open donation fund to often astonish the easy-going actress. One of the loveliest characters I think I ever met is that of Josephine, Louisa Eldridge's sister—tireless in her devotion, unchanging through all these years, she attends unobtrusively to every domestic detail, and enables Louisa to nurse, clothe and pull the Mrs. Greasepaints through this vale of tears, and go to the funerals when they get the final command.³⁶⁹

It is certainly possible that Josie Harwood did perform the domestic role of the woman of the house, while “Aunt” Louisa conducted the business. The idea that Louisa might have no concern for or concept of the finances, however, is ridiculous. A letter to Colonel T. Allston Brown of 1872 gives a tantalizing glimpse of Eldridge managing a tour, possibly an attempt at a starring tour of her own, or maybe an effort to launch her daughter Lillie. From Toronto she writes him:

We opened on Monday night to what looked like a very nice house but when I came to count up, there was only 114\$ in money, nearly all the house is only 25 cts. and it is a miserably small place and so filthy dirty that there is really no place for Ladies to sit. We have had more ladies than any star that season but the pit is what they calculate on and they want rough pieces though Buckley did nothing.... How any body can make money in this horrid dirty theatre I can't see. If you have arranged Buffalo for next week telegraph I would like to take that on my way home. We can do nothing here except the benefit they give no matinee.

Respectfully
Louisa Eldridge³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ Fiske.

³⁷⁰ Louisa Eldridge to Col. T. A. Brown, 24 January 1872, HTC.

Given the tendency for a woman on tour to leave the counting-up to either a hired business manager or her husband, even quite late in the century, the fact that Louisa herself was counting up the house in 1872 indicates an unusual self-reliance at the time, and a good business sense. Her return to the stage after her husband's bankruptcy appears to have put her in control of finances, and as a business woman, she knew exactly what she was talking about. By 1884, Eldridge had weathered the major change in the industry from stock to combination company, and continued to find employment. Flighty or addlebrained she was not. But such a presentation may have been a choice on Mrs. Eldridge's part. If she appeared concerned with money as an agent for beginners, her motives would be called into question, and like the paid nurses of the Civil War period, she would no longer fulfill redemptive female ideology or the role of Benevolent Lady.³⁷¹

In 1885, the *Mirror* reported with a slight smirk that "Aunt Louisa believes the proceedings at the Actors' Fund Meeting on Tuesday were irregular because she arrived late and business was not deferred until her appearance."³⁷² It can be seen from this that Eldridge had adopted that "heightened sense of civic obligation and political participation" that Silber notes as one of the legacies of the Civil War among many Northern women.³⁷³

According to McArthur, after 1885 only one of the original stars who helped found the Actors' Fund remained on the Board of Trustees, and from that time through the end of the century, "only three performers sat on the board for any length of time." "Aunt" Louisa's distrust of the "proceedings" that she did not witness reflected the growing distrust among performers of the Fund management, even in its early years, that McArthur has noted.³⁷⁴ In addition, however,

³⁷¹ See Ginzberg, 135-136, 143-145.

³⁷² "Eldridge," *NYDM*, 6 June 1885, 6.

³⁷³ Nina Silber, *Gender & the Sectional Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 94.

³⁷⁴ McArthur, 95-96.

and consistent with male attitudes towards women in the business noted in Chapter Three, the participation of women in the administration of the Fund is discouraged in this squib through the characterization of Eldridge as a silly and officious old woman. McArthur's discussion of the foundation and management of the Actors' Fund makes it clear that the Fund was an entirely male activity, except for Fanny Davenport's offer to give the first benefit performance,³⁷⁵ although he does not consider why that might be.

The lack of participation by women, and the lack of attention paid them by the Fund, continued to be a problem for the Fund and its client population, as a letter from Mary Shaw in the July 30th, 1892 issue of the *Mirror* indicates:

I am in sympathy heart and soul with the scheme for a women's aid, strictly for actresses.

Whether it could be most beneficial as a branch of the Actors' Fund, or as a separate organization remains to be seen.

I think there should be women in the board of directors of the Actors' Fund.

Please count on me and call on me for any help, financial or otherwise, that I can render.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Shaw³⁷⁶

It would seem from this that the Fund's treatment of female performers had been considered lacking. The question for Shaw was whether the men could be counted on to administer aid by and to women without female representation on the board, or whether it would be better to form a separate organization. The *Mirror's* response to this letter twists Shaw's words and meaning:

The more the plan of a women's aid association in connection with the Actors' Fund is discussed the more it appeals to the sympathy and the judgment of the profession.

There is work—important work and plenty of it—to be done by the women of the stage in addition to the charitable and benevolent work that the Fund is now doing, and we are certain that the actresses who have this pure and worthy cause at heart will succeed in interesting the sisterhood to the extent necessary to bring about the auxiliary's establishment.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ McArthur.

³⁷⁶ Mary Shaw, "For a Women's Auxiliary," *NYDM*, Letter to the Editor, 6 August 1892, 3.

³⁷⁷ Shaw.

This suggests that Shaw was in favor of a women's auxiliary that would support the male effort, rather than a separate women's organization; and it implies that women who do not recognize this "pure and worthy cause" of the auxiliary, as opposed to a separate organization, will somehow be less than pure and worthy themselves, and therefore less womanly. Shortly after this, Mary Shaw, along with "Aunt" Louisa and a number of other women of the theatre and professions founded the Professional Woman's League.³⁷⁸ "Aunt" Louisa was the League's First Vice President for ten years, until just a few years before her death.³⁷⁹

As Benevolent Lady, and as a woman of independent social responsibilities, "Aunt" Louisa seems to have taken matters into her own hands as regards the activities of the Actors' Fund on behalf of female performers. Correspondence with A.M. Palmer, president of the Fund, indicates her benevolent activities on behalf of old and struggling female performers:

Jan 27 / 92

My dear Mr Palmer.

The enclosed letters will explain my business. Mrs. Burgess incidently thinks that Mrs. Conitum is left to stand alone. I feel sure such is not the case. Still her needs must be very pressing. She is old, and ill – that is enough to appeal to all our hearts. She wishes to go to the Forrest Home. I fear they will not take her in there, as she is a Paralytic, but at Fordham the home for incurables will surely receive her. Please try and arrange for her to go there. She is alone, and it is fearful to think of a woman alone and sick in this weather.... I wish I had a home large enough for all our deserving poor, God help them.³⁸⁰

Dec 15th (no year)

My Dear Mr Palmer

I told you yesterday that I had eight dollars and a half of your money to be used for Mrs. Avery. When I reached home last night, I found the enclosed appeal. I went to her home this A.M. She is ill with rheumatism [be]hind 2 weeks rent. Sent in \$1.50 worth of groceries, and gave her one dollar in cash. That uses up the \$20 you so kindly gave her. I told her she must try to get work, as I feared I could do no more. She thoroughly

³⁷⁸ Auster, 74.

³⁷⁹ "Louisa Eldridge Passes Away," *NYDM*, 16 December 1905, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

³⁸⁰ Louisa Eldridge to My dear Mr. Palmer, 27 January 1892, HTC.

understands that the 20\$ is a gift from you – not the Fund. The rent is paid to Dec. 21st.³⁸¹

Dec 22 / 92

Dear Mr. Palmer

Your letter duly received, thanks for your very great kindness.

I did not know whether it was a case for Fund or not but I knew you would stir them up. I guess you have saved the poor woman from the street, but the Fund representative could find out the true state of the case.

Again thanking you

Believe me sincerely

Aunt Louisa³⁸²

In addition to this type of social work activity, Louisa Eldridge was instrumental in obtaining the Actors' Fund burial plot in Evergreen Cemetery, Brooklyn. She also started the tradition of the Stage Children's Christmas Fund, for which she and casting agent Mrs. E.L. Fernandez collected funds and arranged a party every year. In 1893, the party was to be "partly a stage entertainment at Tony Pastor's theatre, partly a children's banquet in Tammany Hall; partly a Christmas tree, with presents for all the little ones and wholly enjoyable and beneficent."³⁸³ Louisa Eldridge's benevolent activities were tightly focused upon the relatively small community of New York City theatrical people, primarily women and children. But she was an entrepreneurial and vigorous volunteer with a hand in a number of different organizations. Within her community, this enabled her to create and maintain a high profile.

The final piece of Aunt Louisa's eccentric public character was her devotion to the flag. During the Civil War, according to Nina Silber, the U.S. flag became for many Northern women "a holy emblem," a symbol of the country's honor, first insulted and then recouped.³⁸⁴ No information could be found on Louisa Eldridge's volunteer work during the war. In fact, with the

³⁸¹ Louisa Eldridge to My dear Mr. Palmer, 15 December n.y., HTC.

³⁸² Louisa Eldridge to Mr. Palmer, 22 December 1892, HTC.

³⁸³ "Aunt Louisa Eldridge," *Spirit*, 2 December 1893, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

³⁸⁴ Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 175, 200, 226.

notable exceptions of Jean Davenport Lander, Princess Salm-Salm, and Pauline Cushman,³⁸⁵ no references to the work of any women performers during the war have been identified, either in the hospitals or with regard to the Soldiers' Aid Societies which provided so many women with a feeling of direct connection with the front, even when they themselves had no relatives in the army.³⁸⁶ However, when John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln, all actors fell immediately under suspicion. Clara Morris writes of the "waves of shame and sorrow" that overwhelmed them when they heard the news, and theatre manager Ellsler's fear of mob violence against the theatre.³⁸⁷ Otis Skinner reports hearing from actor Harry Hawk, member of the cast of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre, that all the members of Laura Keene's company were under arrest for 48 hours, as were all actors in Washington D.C. "A cry went out for the arrest of the whole profession," he reports Hawks as saying.³⁸⁸ "Aunt" Louisa's obsession with the flag could have begun after this event. However it started, her devotion to the flag and the United States was known by the entire theatrical profession. So well was this known, that according to the *New York Telegram*,

Once, when [Edwin Booth] was playing in London he sent her a pair of red, white and blue striped stockings as a souvenir of the Fourth of July. That night she occupied a box at the theatre in which Booth was then playing "Hamlet," and in one of the most moving scenes, she leaned forward, and called to the great actor: "I'd wave 'em, Ed but I've got 'em on." Booth yelled with laughter and the curtain was rung down amid wild cheers, for it was an American audience on the night of the Fourth of July, and the story of the stockings was known.³⁸⁹

It seems unlikely that Booth would have "broken" in that way during *Hamlet*. But on July 3rd, 1882, she wrote from London to "Friend Simmonds" of the Simmonds and Brown agency that

³⁸⁵ "The Passing of Mrs. Lander," *NYDM*, 15 August 1903; "Princess Salm-Salm Dead," *NYDM*, 1 January 1913; Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades: American Women and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 102.

³⁸⁶ Silber, *Daughters*, 173.

³⁸⁷ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 104-105. This was indeed John A. Ellsler, Effie Ellsler's father.

³⁸⁸ Otis Skinner, *Footlights and Spotlights: Recollections of My Life on the Stage* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1924), 178.

³⁸⁹ "Mrs. Eldridge, 'Aunt Louisa,' Dies, Aged 76".

she was going to see Booth in *The Fool's Revenge* that evening and planned to “throw a bouquet tied with the ‘red white & blue.’” Perhaps the incident of the stockings took place that night.³⁹⁰

In 1891, the *Spirit of the Times* reported of Eldridge that “After a triumphal tour through Edinburgh, London and Paris, with American flags for bonnet strings, she will return home, late in August, by way of Antwerp.”³⁹¹ Eldridge self-consciously used the flag of the United States as a symbol of herself and thus as an advertisement for her eccentric character roles as well. At the same time she was reminding all those to whom she played of the participation of women during the war, the respect due them for their participation, and perhaps most important to her community, the patriotism of American actors generally.

Although one obituary states she had been retired since 1897, Eldridge was still soliciting work from Augustin Daly as late as December of 1898, although without success.³⁹² Her obituaries, while not mentioning wealth, did not mention penury either.³⁹³ One can only assume, therefore, that her combination of early 19th-century benevolent lady with post-Civil War Union loyalist and outspoken, highly-networked professional woman gained her a comfortable though not luxurious old age.

Conclusion

“Aunt” Louisa Eldridge managed to fuse the pre-war Benevolent Lady role with the post-war female civilian and patriot to create a public character and a public profile she would never have achieved simply by playing her Old Woman’s line of business. Like the Benevolent Lady

³⁹⁰ Louisa Eldridge to Friend Simmonds, 3 July 1882, HTC.

³⁹¹ “Mrs. Eldridge,” *Spirit*, 13 June 1891, article in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

³⁹² Louisa Eldridge to Augustin Daly, Esq., 2 March 1898, Folger, Daly collection. See also Louisa Eldridge to Augustin Daly, Esq., 19 December 1898, Folger, Daly collection.

³⁹³ Her will left \$500 to her sister, Josephine Harwood, and \$100 to each of three grandchildren, with the residual to be split between her son, vaudeville performer Press Eldridge, and daughter, Lillie Eldridge Ryan, once a comedienne. This indicates some comfort but not wealth. However, the will was written in 1891, fourteen years before her death, and she did not work between 1897 and her death in 1905. Much can change in that time. See “Press Eldridge Gets the Sword,” 22 December 1905, unidentified clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

of old, she used her personal connections with managers and performers alike to raise money for the Stage Children's Christmas fund, and with A.M. Palmer individually to obtain charitable help for destitute women who might otherwise have escaped the notice of the Actors' Fund.

Eventually, however, along with other frustrated theatrical women, she helped to found the Professional Women's League, and remained a member of that organization's governing board for most of the rest of her life.

Georgia Cayvan was able to utilize the industrial theatre family environment to heighten her own profile within the middle- and upper-middle class female audience. She then consciously used the pulpit this higher profile gave her to help transform the way in which actresses were perceived and to provide model behavior for those coming into the business. But the focus on one audience segment that being part of a Frohman company allowed her, and the lack of experience in play selection, production and direction that relationship entailed, served her poorly when she finally attempted to go out on her own.

The next and last chapter will focus on a woman who also lived and performed well within the accepted codes of behavior. But Fanny Davenport's career defied the expectations of what a woman's career in theatre could or should be at the end of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 5

“AMERICA’S FOREMOST STAR AND ATTRACTION”³⁹⁴:

FANNY DAVENPORT

Fanny Davenport spent eight years with Augustin Daly. When she left him, she did not, like Agnes Ethel, sparkle for a while and then fade into marriage. She was not “bought” away from Daly like Ada Dyas. She did not, like Clara Morris, hand over her career and her health to a womanizing gambler,³⁹⁵ although she did marry a man who may have thought he was going to run her. Fanny Davenport formed her own starring combination. She handled her own contracts with theatre managers and authors. Her business managers worked on salary for her; she did not receive a salary from them; and she personally signed all checks. She understood and ran her own business. By the time she died in 1898, hers was one of a very few touring combination companies still under the control of an individual star, and she was virtually the only woman in that position.³⁹⁶ Fanny Davenport remained her own property.

This chapter will examine how Davenport, without once behaving in a rebellious manner or “making a spectacle of herself,” became “America’s foremost star and attraction” and “the best paying female star on the American stage.” It will explore how she became a major theatrical producer during a period when most other women in theatre found it necessary to hand management of their careers over to men. It will analyze how a focus on fashion, as opposed to redemptive womanhood, informed her career; how she fought for stardom within, and then rose

³⁹⁴ Ben Stern to "My dear Mrs. MacDowell", 14 June 1894, Firestone Library, Fanny Davenport collection, Box 3.

³⁹⁵ For Agnes Ethel, see "Death of Agnes Ethel Tracy"; for Clara Morris's marriage see Grossman, chapters 7, 8, and 9. See also Clara Morris Diaries, Schlesinger Library, for instance: 11 January 1878; 26 July 1888. For Ada Dyas, see Augustin Daly to Joseph F. Daly, 12 September 1874, NYPL-PA, Correspondence of Augustin Daly and Joseph F. Daly and documents serving for memoirs, 1858-1899.

³⁹⁶ Francis Wilson, Joseph Jefferson, James A. Herne, and Richard Mansfield were others. Mrs. Fiske's company was managed by her husband.

above the industrial theatre family of Augustin Daly; and how she made a deliberate choice to challenge the greatest emotional actresses of her time, Clara Morris and Sarah Bernhardt. The chapter will end with a brief examination of her business operations at the end of her career.

Building an Image

If living up to the requirements of redemptive womanhood was a concern shared across classes in the decades after the Civil War, fashion, the knowledge and ability to dress well, was also a concern shared across classes, and one that female performers had to contend with no matter what their economic status. According to a German visitor to the United States in the early 1860s:

Even the farmer's daughter looks exactly like a denizen of the towns, reads romances, insists on dressing in silk, and dresses her hair with artificial French flowers in contempt of the natural children of Flora. Ladies in the larger towns are so proud of their pale, interesting complexion, that they disguise and try to drive away the natural roses on their cheeks as something coarse and vulgar.³⁹⁷

This writer deplored his surprising finding that fashion was a concern across the United States, not just in the major metropolises of the Eastern seaboard and in Chicago. But one of the reasons for this was that fashion, then as now, was one of the major demarcations of class. Karen Halttunen notes that:

For the rising middle classes of the nineteenth century, fashion served both as a barrier which had to be surmounted by those entering the more privileged bourgeois circles and as a standard which could be applied to the claims of those seeking admission from below.³⁹⁸

If one wished to climb socially, or gain cultural capital, understanding what to wear and how to wear it was of utmost importance.

³⁹⁷ "American Young Ladyism," by Mr. Kohl, qtd. in "The Women of America," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 8 March 1862, 254.

³⁹⁸ Halttunen, 61-62.

Every class had its fashion requirements. Christine Stansell quotes numerous descriptions of the fashions of Bowery G'ghals in the early part of the century. These young women, concerned with dressing in "utter defiance of those conventional laws of harmony and taste imposed by . . . the French mantua-makers of Broadway,"³⁹⁹ had of necessity to know what those fashions were in order to defy them. Kathy Peiss records the adverse reactions of upper-middle class women in the last quarter of the century to the styles of the working girls, "in too many cases a fantastic imitation of the costly costumes of women of large incomes."⁴⁰⁰ Their interpretation was that the working girls were dressing in this way in order to attract husbands of a higher socio-economic status than their own. But among the working classes, Peiss states, "Sunday clothes . . . were visible displays of social standing and self-respect in the rituals of church-going, promenading, and visiting. Appropriate attire was a requirement of social participation."⁴⁰¹ Young women who worked in the new department stores were encouraged to adopt styles of dress that mimicked those they saw on the women they served; it was an aid in selling to them.⁴⁰² The interest in fashion was by no means limited to so-called idle women of the business, professional and elite classes.

And it would be a mistake to think that all the middle-class women who shopped in department stores, or all the women who attended those theatres that prided themselves on the most fashionable audiences, such as Wallack's, Daly's, the Union Square, or later the Lyceum, had extensive and expensive wardrobes. According to Wendy Gamber, most middle class women contented themselves with:

³⁹⁹ George C. Foster, *New York by Gaslight* (New York, 1850), 107; qtd. in Stansell, 94.

⁴⁰⁰ Mary Augusta LaSelle, *The Young Woman Worker* (Boston, 1914), 89; qtd. in Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements, Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 63.

⁴⁰¹ Peiss.

⁴⁰² Peiss, 65.

a washable calico 'wrapper' in which to perform the considerable work of housekeeping, one or two dresses of silk or better quality cotton for making and receiving calls, and a silk gown for special occasions. Similarly, most women found that an everyday hat and a dress bonnet sufficiently satisfied the social convention that required their heads to be covered whenever they left their homes.⁴⁰³

Most women of the middle class had tiny wardrobes when compared with those of today. A new dress was a considerable investment in money and time. Because of the close fit of the bodice to the body of the individual wearer, women of almost all classes utilized the services of a dressmaker once or twice a year. Mass-produced clothing for women had to await the development of the shirtwaist and skirt ensemble in the early twentieth century. This allowed a slightly looser fit through the bodice. The looser fit made ready-to-wear clothing cut to sized patterns acceptable for everyday street wear for all but the wealthiest women.⁴⁰⁴ Until about 1910, a relationship with a dressmaker was a necessity, if not to complete an entire dress, at least to cut the fabric and fit the bodice for a new one. And many women regularly had dressmakers alter their old dresses as far as possible according to the newest styles.⁴⁰⁵

These yearly or semi-annual appointments with the dressmaker represented an opportunity for women of all but the poorest classes to incorporate the newest fashions in the one dress they had made (or made over). As Lois Banner says, "Through fashion, even women of moderate means signaled their participation in American prosperity and fulfilled the fantasy of being wealthy. Like elite women, working-class, immigrant, and rural women also followed fashion because of the sophistication and modernity it implied."⁴⁰⁶ The popularity of *Godey's Lady's Book* through most of the century, and of *Demorest's* and other fashion magazines in the

⁴⁰³ Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 114.

⁴⁰⁴ Gamber, 216.

⁴⁰⁵ Gamber, 105, 115-116.

⁴⁰⁶ Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 25.

last two decades of the century and beyond, illustrates the importance of fashion to women in many different segments of the middle and working classes.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, leading ladies in the larger metropolitan theatres, particularly those catering to the professional and business classes, had also become models for the newest fashions. The prime way for women to see these fashions was by attending the theatre. Olive Logan blames Mrs. John Hoey for this development. This young actress, then known as Mrs. Josephine Russell, remarried a wealthy entrepreneur and retired from the stage in 1851. When Laura Keene suddenly left Lester Wallack's company mid-season in 1854, he went to Mrs. Hoey and begged her to return to the stage. Her husband consenting, she did so, but with a difference: "Discarding old fashioned methods, she introduced a fashion of elaborate stage dressing, which has since been developed to an extraordinary degree," says one obituary. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, female performers were required to provide their own costumes, purchased out of their own salaries, except in unique circumstances.⁴⁰⁷ Rather than the pretense that most actresses used to costume their roles, Mrs. Hoey now wore the real thing -- real lace, real silk, real Paris fashions.⁴⁰⁸ Costumes of this sort signaled to the audience that she did not have to work, that it was entirely her choice. But they also made Wallack's Theatre the place to go for any woman who wanted to see the newest styles.

Fanny Davenport showed an early and consistent interest in fashion. When she was just 18, she rejected a marriage proposal at the beginning of a letter, then asked the rejected suitor to tell her mother to "bring me a silk sack from California as I am in need of one & they are so much cheaper there than here." She then goes on, with a fine disregard for any feelings on the part of the would-be fiancé, "I got a very pretty green silk last week also a beautiful steel color.

⁴⁰⁷ Logan, 93-94; "Mrs. Hoey Is Dead," *Herald*, 22 July 1896, obituary in Mrs. John Hoey clippings file, BRTC.

⁴⁰⁸ Logan, 383; "Mrs. John Sefton and Mrs. John Hoey," *Clipper*, 27 August 1910.

Do the ladies dress much in San Francisco[?]"⁴⁰⁹ In a letter of February 7th, 1870, she negotiated terms with Daly for the following season, his second. One of her biggest concerns and bargaining points was dressing her roles:

As regards next [season], let me say, I greatly prefer the \$100 a week and no benefit. My reasons for so doing are the following.

My wardrobe consists only of boys dresses, Peasant skirts Burlesque dresses &c relative to the line of business I have been playing, therefore next season I shall have to [have made an?] entire new wardrobe, & I am sure you as well as myself would wish no Leading Lady in the city to dress better than yours. This is easily prevented by giving the \$100.... I have played a line of business in your theatre that my salary is a mere flea bite to: It can make but little difference to you & a great deal to me, being able to have that amount every week all parts can be dressed well but by having the \$75 & a Benefit the few parts after the Benefit will be far superior to the former.⁴¹⁰

Fashionably dressing her parts was clearly something that Fanny relished, while Clara Morris, who arrived on the scene the following season, deplored it.

Heavens, what a nightmare dress used to be to me! For months I would be paying so much a week to my dressmaker for the gowns of a play. I thought my heart would break to pieces, when, during the long run of "Divorce," just as I had finished paying for five dresses, Mr. Daly announced that we were all to appear in new costumes for the one hundredth night.⁴¹¹

This change was required to draw in the audience, and "they will come to see the new dresses," Daly told Morris. It is unlikely that Fanny Davenport had the same reaction to Daly's request, but of course, she was much more successful in her negotiations with Daly from the start. She did not receive the coveted \$100 a week with no benefit for the 1870-71 season she was negotiating for; she got \$75 a week with one benefit. But that was a great deal more than the \$35

⁴⁰⁹ Fanny Davenport to unnamed recipient, n.d. [1868], Houghton, HTC-ALS.

⁴¹⁰ Fanny Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly", 7 February 1870, Folger, Daly Collection.

⁴¹¹ Morris, *Stage Confidences*, 154; but see Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 332. Here she quotes Daly as sweetening a meagre \$55 a week salary offer for her second season by saying "whenever you have five dresses to buy I will provide three, which will belong to me afterward, of course." Whether he made good on this verbal agreement is unknown. But on \$55 a week, with her mother to support, even two new dresses would have been a burden.

or \$40 a week that Morris started at, or the \$55 a week she received during her second season, when *Divorce* had its long run.⁴¹²

But both Fanny's negotiations with Daly and Morris's problems with his orders regarding *Divorce* illustrate the difficult position that costuming put actresses in when working within a stock company of this sort late in the nineteenth century. The focus on fashion for leading ladies and juvenile leading ladies combined with the requirement that the women themselves purchase the dresses again put female performers in the "unbusiness-like and unsatisfactory" position of dependent daughters within the industrial theatrical family, having to ask for financial assistance from the person who had all the power in the relationship. It was, as Morris said, "a bit humiliating, since it made me dependent on his whims, and, worst of all, it opened the door to possible scandal."⁴¹³ There never was any scandal regarding Clara Morris and Augustin Daly. But certainly, an actress who appeared to dress well beyond any imaginable salary without known support from a husband or father was placed in a precarious position with regard to her reputation. And as Olive Logan pointed out, for most actresses in leading business, by the 1870s the cost of dressing the roles ate up much of their salary.⁴¹⁴

For Fanny Davenport, however, dressing her roles was something of an obsession. When she produced Anna Dickinson's play, *An American Girl*, in the fall of 1880, rich costuming became one of the criteria for the role she had commissioned Dickinson to write, and she even tried to get Dickinson to change the reason for her exit at the end of the last act so she could wear the travelling dress in grey and wine color for which she had a "lovely design."⁴¹⁵ So much stress

⁴¹² Morris says she started at \$35 a week and was raised \$5 a week for the balance of the first season when Daly wanted her to sign for the following season. Cooley and Odell both state that Daly's salary book for the 1870-71 season says she received \$40. Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 330, 332; Cooley, 81; Odell 9:19.

⁴¹³ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 376.

⁴¹⁴ Logan, 147-148.

⁴¹⁵ Stacey A. Stewart, "Nothing Ladylike About It: The Theatrical Career of Anna Elizabeth Dickinson," (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2004), 243-244, 248-249, ProQuest (AAT 3125444).

was laid on her costumes in pre-production publicity that they became something of a joke within the critical community. The *New York Evening Post* tantalized potential ticket-buyers with this notice:

Information for the ladies. It is announced that one hundred persons are at work upon six dresses for Fanny Davenport to wear in Miss Dickinson's play of 'An American Girl,' and that two weeks were occupied in preparing the designs for these gorgeous habiliments. It is plain, therefore, that if the play is as good as the millinery there is a treat in store for New York.⁴¹⁶

Her costumes were designed "to make Bernhardt shake in her satin slippers," according to the *Spirit of the Times*. This writer references notices such as the one above, but then takes the costume approach to the play's publicity several steps further:

If Miss Dickinson's comedy is to be all costumes, Mr. William Winter will have an easy evening, and there will be no fight in the *Tribune*. For *The Spirit* we have carefully prepared an advance criticism upon a new model, which we place at the disposal of our bretheren: 'In Act first, Miss Davenport dashed upon the stage, dragging a train of uncut velvet, upon which 84 dress-makers were employed for 9 days. She turned, displaying a Jersey waist, to which 49 seamstresses had devoted 7 days and nights, and raising aloft her right arm and hand, gloved by the united efforts of 11 kidworkers during 6 weeks, she flashed upon the enthusiastic audience an elegant bracelet, upon which 45 of Tiffany's choicest workmen had been engaged for 1 month and for the diamonds in which 116 hardy pioneers had toiled and delved for nearly a year.'⁴¹⁷

The focus on the American manufacture of magnificent costumes for an American play entitled *An American Girl* was probably due in large part to the highly publicized visit of Sarah Bernhardt, expected to land in New York in late October. According to Cornelia Otis Skinner, "Bernhardt's professional clothes were veritable works of art...Her silks were woven to order in Lyon, her velvets were imported from Italy, her furs from Russia. Every item of trimming or embroidery was lavish." One ball gown for Marguerite Gauthier, in *La Dame aux Camellias*, was said to have cost 10,000 francs.⁴¹⁸ The United States had only four years previously

⁴¹⁶ 10 September 1880, qtd. in Stewart, 253.

⁴¹⁷ [Miss Dickinson's comedy], *Spirit*, 18 September 1880, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴¹⁸ Cornelia Otis Skinner, *Madame Sarah* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), 147.

celebrated its centennial, and the months of advance publicity prior to Sarah's landing must have ruffled more than a few nationalistic feathers.

The focus on Davenport's costumes may also have been an attempt to deflect attention from the play itself. Anna Dickinson was famous for her passionate delivery of speeches on subjects such as abolition, women's rights, and the rights of prostitutes, among many topics. Fanny Davenport can be forgiven for hoping that Dickinson's fire and passion would transfer to a play written by her, but writing a play is quite different from writing a speech. *An American Girl*, which was to have been a major event in the 1880-81 season, was poorly structured and perhaps somewhat preachy. Although it played for six weeks in New York, in large part because of the fashions, and for several weeks on tour, Davenport dropped it from her repertoire before the turn of the new year.⁴¹⁹ But while the decision to use the costumes and their American construction as a major portion of the publicity package may have been occasioned by Bernhardt's expected arrival, or the poor quality of the script, it also built upon Fanny's reputation as "the representative of fashion, beauty and comedy," as Judge Daly describes her during her time at the Fifth Avenue Theatre.⁴²⁰

Fanny Davenport's focus on fashion and dress during much of her career may have been occasioned by a wish to create an elite image, thus upgrading her class status. Her family was highly respected within U.S. theatre, and there is no indication that she was anything but proud of her background in a theatre family. But as has been discussed previously, during the post-Civil War years, the arts in the United States became more stratified into "legitimate" and popular forms, and at the same time, there was an influx into the theatre of people from non-

⁴¹⁹ Stewart, 252, 260; "The Stage: Anna Dickinson's New Play," *Boston Daily Globe*, 26 September, 1880, 5, ProQuest.

⁴²⁰ Joseph Francis Daly, *Life of Augustin Daly*, (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1917), 159-160, <http://www.archive.org/details/lifeofaugustinda00daly>.

theatrical families. Davenport did not attempt to erase her theatrical background (which she could not have done if she had wanted to) but she did attempt to erase, or at any rate downplay, evidence of the non-“legitimate” theatre in her own and her parents’ backgrounds and lift them all into the strictly legitimate. She did this both through her focus on fashion, and through the types of roles she chose to include in her repertoire once she left Augustin Daly’s management.

Fanny Lily Gypsy Davenport’s mother, Fanny Elizabeth Vining, had played “the whole range of leading business with Mr. Macready [and] Mr. Charles Kean,” as she herself stated in a letter to an autograph hunter in 1869. “Under the latter gentleman’s management [I] played at Windsor Castle twice, before the Queen, Prince Albert and the royal family,” she wrote.⁴²¹ (She will be referred to hereinafter as Mrs. Davenport, although until her daughter Fanny entered the profession as an adult, she usually signed herself Fanny Davenport.) Mrs. Davenport’s husband, American-born E.L. Davenport, although coming from outside the profession, had made for himself a reputation equal to that of Junius Brutus Booth, Sr. and James W. Wallack, Sr. Davenport was not a self-promoter like Edwin Forrest, and he had no attention-getting, star-making bad habits, such as Booth, Sr.’s drunken manias. But he had a reputation as a “a tragedian, a comedian, a farceur, a mimic, a possessor of almost every talent which goes to the making of a dramatic genius,” according to his biographer.⁴²² He could, as Anna Cora Mowatt said, “embody with equal ease an Othello or a Yankee, a cardinal or a sailor.”⁴²³ His roles ranged from Hamlet to Adam Trueman, the Yankee farmer in Mowatt’s *Fashion*, from Othello to Jacques to the villain Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and back to Sweet William the British sea tar (with interpolated Yankee songs and jigs) in Douglass Jerrold’s two-

⁴²¹ Mrs. E.L. Davenport to the Hon. Mr. B. Mackay, "Dear Sir," 14 March 1869, HTC-ALS-Davenport family.

⁴²² Edward Francis Edgett, *Edward Loomis Davenport, A Biography*, (New York: The Dunlap Society, 1901), 4.

⁴²³ Mowatt, 295.

act melodrama, *Black-Eyed Susan*, which he played to acclaim in London as well as in the United States.⁴²⁴ “We have seen him play *Hamlet* and *William* in 'Black-Eyed Susan' on the same evening, and equally well,” one journalist said.⁴²⁵ He was known for his versatility. And like most other performers in U.S. theatre in the early and mid-nineteenth century, both Fanny’s parents played in melodrama, spectacle, old-fashioned burlesque, Shakespeare’s tragedies and comedies—whatever was required—through most of their theatrical life.

Fanny Davenport was a beautiful young woman. Many years after her death, William Winter wrote of her in her youth as “a voluptuous beauty, radiant with youth and health, taut and trim of figure, having regular features, a fair complexion, golden hair, sparkling hazel eyes, and a voice as naturally musical and cheery as the fresh, incessant rippling flow of a summer brook.”⁴²⁶ She was full of energy and “animal spirits.”⁴²⁷ And she was also tall – five feet eight inches by one report.⁴²⁸ All of these attributes fit her for success as a broad comedienne, even a burlesquer. And true to this form, she started her adult career as a soubrette.

The soubrette role was earlier in the century called a “singing chambermaid,” and included breeches parts as well as the cocky, sexy, servant- or working-class characters who were often the companions of the leading lady.⁴²⁹ James Burge describes it as “a very rough equivalent to male low comedy.”⁴³⁰ Judge Joseph Daly, in his biography of his brother, describes these roles as “impossible characters who in old comedies invent plans for deceiving

⁴²⁴ Edgett, 42-43.

⁴²⁵ “Fanny Davenport-Price,” 20 May 1882, unidentified clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴²⁶ William Winter, *Vagrant Memories: Being Further Recollections of Other Days* (New York: George H. Doran & Co., 1915), 229.

⁴²⁷ “Theatrical. Fifth Avenue,” *NYT*, 10 December, 1872, 4, ProQuest.

⁴²⁸ [Miss Dickinson’s comedy]. Perhaps an exaggeration, but perhaps not. This is the article that made fun of the costuming for Dickinson’s play. She may have been 5’6”, a measurement she gives to a mummy said to be Cleopatra’s in the British Museum, when she was defending her interpretation of Sardou’s play. See “Can Critics Err?,” *Toledo Blade*, 14 May 1896, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴²⁹ Morris, *Life on the Stage*, 39.

⁴³⁰ James C. Burge, *Lines of Business: Casting Practice and Policy in the American Theatre, 1752-1899* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 105.

unreasonable guardians, aiding sincere lovers, and effecting indispensable elopements.”⁴³¹ But in new comedies, they also sang and danced, if the genre of the play called for or allowed it. Pert in Boucicault’s *London Assurance*, is a soubrette role, with the type of name such characters often have. Topsy in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, is a “first singing soubrette” role. Lotta Crabtree became a star and spent much of her adult career playing first singing soubrette roles.⁴³²

During the middle of the century, the soubrette line of business also included burlesque. Odell reports Fanny Davenport starred in a summer’s season of burlesque at Hooley’s Theatre, Brooklyn, in 1868. At Hooley’s, she played Prince Popetti in the burlesque of *Cinderella*, Aladdin in the burlesque of that name, and a burlesque of her father’s favorite role, Sweet William, in an amalgam of *Black-Eyed Susan* and something called the *Grand Duchess*, among numerous other lead roles. The *Brooklyn Eagle* said of her opening in *Cinderella*:

In addition to a stage presence of more than ordinary beauty and a voice of great sweetness and good compass, she is possessed of more than average ability as a burlesque actress. Last night she threw into the rendition of the part of *Poppetti* an *abandon* and force, which secured for her well merited applause. Her singing was really excellent, securing several encores in the more popular of her selections. Miss Davenport will soon establish herself in this city as a great favorite, and will prove the strongest attraction to the neat little house on Court Street.⁴³³

Had she wanted to, or had she been less proactive in managing her career, Fanny Davenport could have become a top burlesque and variety performer on the order of Eliza Weathersby, who began her career as a British Blonde, or Mrs. James A. Oates, who toured her own burlesque company through the 1870s and early 80s.⁴³⁴ In the letter to Daly of February 7th, 1870, quoted previously, Fanny continued her negotiation regarding the 1870-71 season by confirming that she was to have “all the Leading Comedy, Singing, Burlesque & a share of serious, to try if I can

⁴³¹ Joseph Francis Daly, *Life of Augustin Daly* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1917), 189-190.

⁴³² For descriptions of the roles Lotta played, see Diana Serra Cary, "Crabtree, Lotta," ed. Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger, 172.

⁴³³ *Brooklyn Eagle*, 16 June, 1868; quoted in George C. D. Odell, (1937; reprint, 1970), 8:393-394.

⁴³⁴ "Miss Eliza Weathersby"; [Mrs. James A. Oates], *NYDM*, 15 January 1887, 10.

play it.”⁴³⁵ At this very early stage in her career, she still welcomed burlesque roles as long as they were the “leading” roles. But her request to play a “share of serious” indicates that even before Agnes Ethel’s great success in *Frou-Frou*, to surprise everyone in just two weeks, Fanny Davenport understood that stardom (at least for women) was tied to dramatic roles.

Fanny’s size and physical attributes worked both for and against her. She became a great favorite at Daly’s theatre during the first season and continued as a favorite because of her high spirits and her versatility, as well as because of her looks. Odell says that even in this first season, “she began to be a much photographed beauty.”⁴³⁶ But she was too expansive in spirit, too vital, and too healthy looking for a juvenile leading lady of the period. Agnes Ethel represented to the audience of Daly’s Fifth Avenue the femininity and charm that Lois Banner has termed the Steel Engraving Lady, the young, pure, small-featured, delicate woman who appears to be in imminent danger of death by consumption.⁴³⁷ Ethel had that air of delicacy and innocence that somehow negated for her audience the passion-driven actions of *Frou-Frou*, the young woman who deserts her husband and child to elope with a man she has met while rehearsing parlor theatricals. Two months after *Frou-Frou* closed, Agnes Ethel was cast as Fernande in the play of that name. The same qualities of fragility and innocence enabled the audience to accept the premise that in spite of growing up in a gambling den and brothel, Fernande had managed to remain clean and pure of heart.

Fanny Davenport represented “youth, buxom beauty, and abundant joyous vitality,” “the true spirit of mischief,” and again, “animal spirits.”⁴³⁸ She probably presented that slightly overwhelming female sensuality that had become associated with burlesque by the end of the

⁴³⁵ Fanny Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly," 7 February 1870, Folger, Daly collection.

⁴³⁶ Odell, 8:575.

⁴³⁷ Banner, 51, 52, 53.

⁴³⁸ "The Drama: Fifth Avenue Theater," *New York Tribune*, 30 September, 1869, 4, ProQuest; "Fifth Avenue Theater--The Busybody," *New York Tribune*, 4 January, 1870, 4, ProQuest.

Civil War.⁴³⁹ She did not fit the prevailing ideal of the “emotional” actresses who became the stars of the 1870s. Yet “emotional” acting was where stardom lay for young juvenile leads. With Ethel’s success at the end of the first season, and Clara Morris’s astounding and continuing success in the following two seasons, Fanny Davenport found herself unable to move from the role of leading comedienne in what one critic termed “toilette-roles,”⁴⁴⁰ into the serious “emotional” roles that would give her leading lady and star status.

This is not to say that Davenport had no opportunity for the serious roles she had set her eyes on in February of 1870. Daly seems to have started early his practice of sending second companies out with his most successful shows. In March, during the run of *Frou-Frou*, Davenport wrote him from Madison, New Jersey, condemning the theatre he had booked the company into in Elizabeth, and demanding a hotel room to herself without the odious responsibility of caring for the child in the cast. I have found no indication of what play Fanny and company were travelling in, although the mention of the child makes it possible Daly had sent her out in *Frou-Frou* to see whether she could play it. But sandwiched in between the condemnation of the theatre and the demand for her own hotel room is this interesting paragraph:

I hope you will run down to Springfield[New Jersey] as I would like your judgment on my sentimental powers, & I would so like to play at that Broadway Theatre you spoke of; [illegible] is my chance coming a la “Frou Frou” I think the principal part in “Champagne” belongs to me however I leave it entirely to your judgment feeling now you will do right by me always, feeling sure some part will be allotted me to give me as strong a hold on the public & establish me with them as “Frou Frou” has Miss Ethel.⁴⁴¹

The tone of this paragraph is surprisingly submissive, and must have been music to Daly’s ears, or eyes. Odell has suggested that Daly often “froze out” performers with whom he no longer

⁴³⁹ Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, 104-108.

⁴⁴⁰ “Charity’ at the Fifth Avenue Theatre,” *NYT*, 4 March, 1874, 5, ProQuest.

⁴⁴¹ Fanny Davenport to “My dear Mr. Daly,” 9 March 1870, Folger, Daly collection. Daly never produced a play entitled “Champagne.”

wished to work, by sending them to other New York theatres or out on tour.⁴⁴² Fanny Davenport had refused to play the role assigned to her in *Frou-Frou*, Pauline, which she described the January before it opened as “a second chambermaid one scene in each act & not a good line in the part & the fourth rate part in the piece” and “no part for a lady who has played three leading parts, & is looked upon by the company & public as your leading woman.”⁴⁴³ By offering her additional salary for that season, and a raise for the following season, along with a “rationale” that Davenport refers to in her reply to his offer, Daly convinced Fanny to take the part,⁴⁴⁴ but she had only stayed in it for two weeks. Perhaps when it became apparent that *Frou-Frou*’s run would be a long one, she had threatened to leave, and Daly offered her the tour and the opportunity to try a serious role in order to keep his fashionable draw in his company. But such an assignment could as easily have been read as a warning to her to behave. Her submissiveness in this paragraph may also have been just a rather transparent tactic to get him to come down and see her work, since the very next line in the letter is “Be kind enough to impress on Mr Nixon that in the Hotels I have a room to myself for under no circumstances whatever will I room with any member of the company of ladies now with me.” And she ends the letter, “Hoping once more to return to a civilized Theatre & there remain.” Neither these sentences nor the general tone of the rest of the letter are submissive.

In February of 1872, Fanny was again sent on tour, this time all the way to New Orleans. This was the end of Clara Morris’s second season at Daly’s Fifth Avenue. Fanny had been cast in comedy leads and “toilette roles” for two straight years. She was popular with audiences, and playing (and dressing) the roles of wealthy young society women undoubtedly helped her create the upper-middle class image she strove to project during most of her career. But Morris had

⁴⁴² Odell, 9:149, 260 regarding Agnes Ethel; 539 regarding Sara Jewett

⁴⁴³ Fanny Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly," 31 January 1870, Folger, Daly collection.

⁴⁴⁴ Fanny Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly," 1 February 1870, Folger, Daly collection.

burst into stardom right under her feet, and Fanny had had no opportunity to try serious business. *Divorce* had played straight through from September to February with Fanny in the comedy lead and Morris in the emotional lead. A letter from Fanny's father to Daly reveals there was some uncertainty as to what this trip to New Orleans might indicate:

It is very gratify[ing?] to learn your good intentions & more than 'conventional courtesies' sentence to warm her & I am grateful for your care & thoughtfulness in the matter. I am certain you rightly appreciated my anxiety & that of Mrs. D. We both feel more than pleased to know you appreciate Miss Fanny's desire to stand by you in your enterprise.⁴⁴⁵

There had apparently been some worry that the trip was a ruse to separate Fanny from the company, and Daly had assured them otherwise. Judge Daly says that at the end of the season, in May or June of 1872, "Miss Davenport was also fitted out with a company to star in 'Divorce,' taking Miss Morris' part, Fanny Ten Eyck." He places this tour in New Orleans, from whence, he says, Lawrence Barrett wrote, "She is certainly as sound in sentiment as she is airy and charming in comedy. She has the best of her parent stock in her composition."⁴⁴⁶ Odell notes Fanny's disappearance from the cast of *Divorce* in February, but not from the cast of *Article 47* later in the season. It is likely Judge Daly was mixed up. She would be unlikely to have gone to New Orleans twice within three months. So although Fanny was valued most in New York City as a comedienne with a beautiful wardrobe, she did have some opportunities out of town during Daly's first seasons to extend her range.

Davenport also began to take advantage of the opportunities offered her by the benefit system. According to Helen Huff, the benefit system was "abolished" in 1868, when Lester Wallack indeed abolished it at his theatre.⁴⁴⁷ Odell says that Daly "restored the habit of

⁴⁴⁵ E.L. Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly", 16 February 1872, Folger, Daly collection.

⁴⁴⁶ Daly, *Life of Augustin Daly*, 111.

⁴⁴⁷ Mary Helen Huff, "That Benefit Racket: Women and the Benefit in New York Theatre, 1840-1875 " (Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Studies University Center, City University of New York, 2000), 205-207.

providing benefits for the players” during his 1869-70 season, his first, as though benefits had been long out of fashion.⁴⁴⁸ But E.L. Davenport negotiated with Daly for two benefits the summer before the first season opened,⁴⁴⁹ and as Fanny’s letter to Daly shows, she was negotiating against a benefit in February of 1870; it was Daly who preferred the benefit. And Daly was not the only theatre manager still negotiating benefits with actors. Thus, in May of 1873, Fanny played the role of Frou-Frou for the first time in New York City for the benefit of actor D.H. Harkins at the Union Square Theatre. In 1875, at Booth’s Theatre for Lawrence Barrett, Fanny played the classic juvenile leading lady Pauline in Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Lady of Lyons*. At Daly’s for her own benefit in 1875, she attempted Julia in *The Hunchback*, another classic juvenile lead role that actresses such as Anna Cora Mowatt and Julia Marlowe had made their names in. Later that spring, she appeared for the first time as Rosalind in *As You Like It*.⁴⁵⁰

By 1875, however, Fanny Davenport had become the undisputed leading lady of Daly’s theatre. In the 1873-74 season, with Clara Morris out of the way, Ada Dyas unhappy and finally leaving Daly after less than a full season, and Sarah Jewett no serious threat, Fanny embarked upon a strategy that many beautiful and sexy actresses have followed when they wish to become respected for their acting abilities in addition to their appearance. In March of 1874, given the role of the “the outcast, sodden, hopeless Ruth Tredgett,”⁴⁵¹ said the *New York Times*,

Miss Davenport last night threw her beauty to the winds, and came forth as a vagrant with as much self-reliance and earnestness as she has ever shown in the assumption of what we might not unjustly call toilette-rôles. Ruth Tredgett’s opening scene could not easily have been made more touching, and, indeed, Miss Davenport’s whole performance could not have been bettered in point of picturesqueness or strength.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁸ Odell, 8:580.

⁴⁴⁹ E.L. Davenport to "My Dear Sir" (Augustin Daly), 3 August 1869, Folger, Daly Collection.

⁴⁵⁰ Odell, 9:272, 531, 542, 10:18.

⁴⁵¹ Odell, 9:18, 397.

⁴⁵² "'Charity' at the Fifth Avenue Theatre."

At the end of March, when she returned to the rôle after an illness, the *Times* welcomed her back to “the arena of her new triumphs,” calling her performance

at once a study and a revelation. A study, from its fidelity to nature; and a revelation, because through it the public have learned the true worth of a great dramatic talent which has been quietly but surely developing during these few seasons since Miss Davenport first achieved popularity with the Fifth Avenue company.⁴⁵³

As Odell states, “No longer was it possible to say that Miss Davenport was merely the handsomest and best dressed actress on the American stage; Ruth Tredgett in rags and dirt and knotted unkempt hair showed her to be far more than that.”⁴⁵⁴

Daly and Davenport followed up this triumph almost immediately with Daly’s adaptation of *Oliver Twist*. Although the *Spirit of the Times* excoriated both the adaptation and Davenport’s performance as Nancy Sykes, saying that it was “an enlarged edition of the Tramp in Charity, and developed no new points,” and that “she was decidedly amateurish, and jumped at her points without attending to details,”⁴⁵⁵ the *Times* said that her performance “confirmed and intensified” the success she had made with Ruth Tredgett.⁴⁵⁶ The part remained in her repertoire until in 1883, she opened in Sardou’s *Fedora*, although as late as 1889, she wrote in answer to a question about favorite rôles that “poor Nancy Sykes comes in for a share of my affection.”⁴⁵⁷ In December of the following season she was given the rôle of Mabel Renfrew in *Pique*, that would make her a star in the manner of Clara Morris, with a salary to match her standing.⁴⁵⁸ Through patience and continued pressure on her manager, she had finally realized her first goal.

Pique was the Daly brothers’ adaptation of Frances Marryat Lean’s *Her Lord and Master* amalgamated with known details and suppositions about the real kidnapping case of young

⁴⁵³ "Fifth Avenue Theatre," *NYT*, 29 March, 1874, 5, ProQuest.

⁴⁵⁴ Odell, 9:397.

⁴⁵⁵ "Fifth Avenue Theatre," *Spirit*, 23 May 1874, clipping in Robinson Lockke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴⁵⁶ "Amusements. City Affairs. Fifth-Avenue Theatre," *NYT*, 24 May, 1874, 7, ProQuest.

⁴⁵⁷ Fanny Davenport to "My dear Sir", 9 January 1889, Houghton, HTC.

⁴⁵⁸ Odell, 10:19, 192.

Charlie Ross.⁴⁵⁹ The role of Mabel Renfrew allowed Davenport to portray, in one character, nearly all of the roles of “woman” that were circulating during and after the Civil War, most of which had populated Daly’s “hits” of the 1870s: the spoiled and petted society girl whose refusal to submit to her husband (or in this case, her father-in-law) is the catalyst for the action; the mother whose entire thought and action is on behalf of the child; the penitent invalid. At the climax of the play, Mabel, recovered from her illness, enters disguised as the old crazy woman who was sent by the kidnapers to bring her and her jewels to them as part of the ransom, so Davenport was also able to fold into the performance the downtrodden lower-class character she had so recently brought to the stage. As the upper class woman taking on such a disguise and putting herself in physical danger for the sake of her child, she also performed the woman of heroism and action who, although no longer celebrated publicly, must indeed have formed some part of the legend of women’s culture in the decade after the war, as Jane Schultz and Nina Silber have suggested.⁴⁶⁰

Self-Management and Marriage

The late 1870s was a difficult period for theatre due to the financial Panic of 1873. On September 10th, 1877, Augustin Daly gave up the management of the Fifth Avenue Theatre, the “culmination of the long financial distress,” as Judge Daly puts it.⁴⁶¹ On the first of September, 1877, E.L. Davenport had died.⁴⁶² Fanny returned from her family’s troubles to touring under Daly’s management on September 20th.⁴⁶³ On November 15th, she sent him a “draft” for \$1,500 from St. Louis with a request to deposit it in her bank account. This substantial amount for

⁴⁵⁹ Felheim, 130-132.

⁴⁶⁰ See the beginning of Chapter Two of this dissertation for this discussion.

⁴⁶¹ Daly, *Life of Augustin Daly*, 242, 246.

⁴⁶² Edgett, 126.

⁴⁶³ “Dramatic Notes,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 20 September, 1877, 5.

deposit indicates that as a star, she was receiving a share of the box office, not just a salary from Daly. And at some point between September and the end of December, 1877, Fanny turned to Daly for help in negotiating a sharing contract with Wallack, for a starring appearance.⁴⁶⁴ In December, at a price of \$3,500, Fanny purchased a large inventory of costumes from Daly for the plays she had been most successful in during her years with him.⁴⁶⁵ As news articles reveal, she would depend on *Pique*, *The School for Scandal* (Lady Teazle), *London Assurance* (Lady Gay Spanker), *Oliver Twist*, and *Rosalind in As You Like It* for the next several years. After the failure of Dickinson's *An American Girl*, she added *Camille*, Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*, and Imogen in *Cymbeline* to her repertoire. Of all these roles, Marguerite Gauthier in *Camille*, and Imogen were the only ones she had not appeared in under Daly's management. With the exceptions of Mabel Renfrew in *Pique* and Nancy Sykes in *Oliver Twist*, all of these roles, including Marguerite Gautier, were considered classics by the audiences and critics of the day, although *Camille* continued to be deplored because of its setting and theme. *Camille*, of course, was being played at the time by Bernhardt, and was played by Helena Modjeska as well, both recognized as actresses whose approach to acting made of theatre an art, not simply entertainment. Fanny added it to her repertoire in early 1881, just after the failure of the Dickinson play, and during Sarah Bernhardt's tour. She also attempted *Lady Macbeth* in 1881,⁴⁶⁶ but this was quickly dropped from her repertoire. Fanny's choice of roles once she left Daly point clearly to her desire to be accounted a classical leading lady of a versatility approaching that of her father's, not merely a popular success.

⁴⁶⁴ Fanny Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly", 15 November 1877, Folger, Daly collection. Fanny Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly," n.d., 1877, Folger, Daly collection. She never did appear with Wallack, but she did appear at A.M. Palmer's Union Square Theatre the following August.

⁴⁶⁵ Contract(s) between Augustin Daly and Fanny Davenport regarding, 29 December, 1877, in Daly collection, Folger; Contract(s) between Fanny Davenport and Augustin Daly regarding, 29 December, 1877, in Daly Collection, Folger.

⁴⁶⁶ "Fanny Davenport," *Spirit*, 19 March 1881, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC; "Plays and Actors," *NYT*, 4 December, 1881, 9, ProQuest.

In 1882, under the management of her husband, Edwin H. Price, whom she had married in 1879, Davenport went to London hoping to achieve the critical success there that ensured high artistic status with a performer's return to the United States. The trip was a professional disaster. To begin with, neither she nor Price knew London theatrical geography. She had been booked into Toole's Theatre at Charing Cross, the theatre which, as the Folly, had been Lydia Thompson's London home after her success in the States. Before Thompson's tenure, the theatre had housed a string of theatrical failures, and after Thompson, only H.J. Byron's burlesques had had any real success. J.L. Toole, only recently become manager, was a low comedian and burlesquer, as well. The theatre had recently been refurbished and enlarged, and was later to do quite well, but at this time, its burlesque reputation and old name still clung to it.⁴⁶⁷ Secondly, her publicity again focused heavily on her jewels and her clothing. London critics and theatrical society did not greet this flaunting of American wealth and fashion favorably. Although the *Boston Globe's* Special Correspondent felt that "her magnificent display of diamonds" was an attraction for the British audience,⁴⁶⁸ London's *Truth* excoriated "American ladies" for thinking that "the jewelcase and the milliner's trunk are the necessary passports to popularity in this country and to success upon the stage."⁴⁶⁹ *Music and Drama*, a New York publication, taking its cue from *Truth*, reported that

A prejudice...was created against her by the foolish gossip set on foot by her manager, about her dresses and her diamonds, as well as by the very senseless and very common American practice of sending up "floral tributes" before she had shown any right to such tokens of success. Let it be recorded to Miss Davenport's credit that she came forward unwillingly to receive the offerings of her admirers.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ *Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll, s.v. "Toole's Theatre" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 795-796.

⁴⁶⁸ Special Correspondence of *The Sunday Globe*, "Fanny Davenport in London: 'Diane De Lys' an Unfortunate Selection for Her Debut, but the Actress Gains Favor," *Boston Daily Globe*, 24 September, 1882, 4, ProQuest.

⁴⁶⁹ "Truth's Review of Davenport's Diane," *Boston Daily Globe*, 1 October, 1882, 4, ProQuest.

⁴⁷⁰ "[Miss Davenport's appearance]," *Music & Drama*, 30 September, 1882, 14, GoogleBooks.

Her unwilling receipt of the flowers was the only thing, it appears, that saved Davenport from complete dismissal as a vulgar *parvenu*. Finally, she had chosen to open with a new production, a translation of Dumas' *Diane de Lys*. The story is of a thoughtlessly flirtatious young wife who falls in love with another man while her husband is out of the country on a diplomatic mission. Her husband returns and finds them together but "instead of taking summary vengeance on the seducer," says the *Globe* in a lengthy plot summary, "coolly tells him that the next time he catches him with his wife he will kill him. He follows this up by urging his wife to return to her allegiance [to himself]. He is willing to condone the past and let bygones be bygones," if she will give up her new love. She does not, and the husband does attempt to shoot the lover, but misses and hits Diane instead.⁴⁷¹ This was in the line of "fallen woman" stories that had proven so popular at Daly's during the 1870s. It was the second of its type that Fanny had attempted under her own management. In 1878, Fanny had produced *Olivia*, an adaptation of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, at the Union Square Theatre during the August pre-season. That had failed, as did *Diane de Lys*. The plot lines and heroines that might have attracted audiences in 1870s New York were not appropriate for the London audiences and critics who had lionized the Bancrofts and the Kendals in Tom Robertson's cup-and-saucer drama. The *Boston Globe* reprinted the review from London's *Truth* in its entirety. As part of the critique, The *Truth* critic suggested Fanny return to her strengths, although he was probably not aware of her early line of business:

Miss Fanny Davenport is an actress who, if she were on the English stage, would be set to play Mrs. Candour, Mrs. Malaprop, and at a pinch, Mrs. Sternhold. She is a "fine figure of a woman." She would be "indifferently bad" as Cleopatra, with some modern Hercules as Antony. She wants a large stage, a wide scene, and plenty of elbow-room. She dwarfs her surroundings by the magnificence of her proportions. She startles with her dresses, and dazzles with her diamonds. They tell me she plays Lady Teazle, but I cannot believe it.... It is so difficult to tell a lady with a young heart, but who has outgrown her silliness[?] that such love-lorn characters are not hers, and that poetry and soul are not associated with embonpoint...Had she been well advised, she would have appeared in

⁴⁷¹ "Fanny Davenport in London," 24 September 1882.

some bright comedy that would have suited her breadth of style and evident cheeriness of manner.⁴⁷²

This critique reiterates what some reviewers had said regarding her work in the Dickinson play. The *Herald* had noted there that “her acting of the lighter comedy of the play was quite up to her usual standard—a standard which made her a great favorite on the New York stage as the picture of the fashionable drawing room belle.” But the *New York Dramatic News* had said:

She has grown too large, too stout and too mature to play girls. When she runs she waddles....Her shoulders and bust and arms and chin have developed hugely...If Fanny Davenport would succeed in the future, it must be in mature dramatic parts, not in those of unmarried girls.⁴⁷³

London’s *Truth* was telling her the same thing. She was not the type of actress who could play girls at the age of 33. She was simply too large.⁴⁷⁴ Fanny took the *Truth* article to heart. Soon after her return to New York, she began a diet and exercise program that, from her description, was remarkably close to the Atkins program – daily exercise, no breads, cakes, or sweets, and practically no vegetables, only high protein foods. Over the next year she lost such a noticeable amount of weight that she began to be interviewed about it. In a nod to the London critics, she told the *New York Sun* in March of 1884 that she had first become alarmed about her size in London. By September of 1884, she was said to be “slenderer in physique than she has ever been in the remembrance of her New-York friends.”⁴⁷⁵ But the failures of *Diane de Lys* and *American Girl* had made it clear that Davenport needed to find roles that made use of her stage presence, her size, and her maturity.

⁴⁷² "Truth's Review."

⁴⁷³ *New York Herald*, 21 September 1880. *New York Dramatic News*, 22 September 1880. Both qtd. in Stewart, 256-257.

⁴⁷⁴ Davenport never returned to London professionally. It is not difficult to imagine, some ten years later, when in negotiating with Sardou she turned down the rights to *Cleopatra* in Great Britain and the colonies, that *Truth*'s suggestion that she would be “indifferently bad” as *Cleopatra*” might have given her pause.

⁴⁷⁵ "Does It Pay to Bant? What Actors and Actresses Think About It.," *Boston Daily Globe*, 24 March, 1884, 4, ProQuest; "The Theatrical Season," *NYT*, 21 September, 1884, 3, ProQuest.

The Sardou Plays

Before Fanny Davenport returned to New York in the fall of 1883, she had acquired the American rights to Sardou's *Fedora*, thus putting herself into direct competition with Sarah Bernhardt. As discussed further below, she had done this before, when two years earlier she had included *Camille* in her repertoire and played it regularly in cities in which Bernhardt was about to appear or was actually appearing. She had had generally good results. According to Davenport, she bought *Fedora* for the U.S. market simply because it was a good play that seemed right for her. However, she made as sure as she could that neither Bernhardt nor anyone else would be able to obtain the U.S. rights to the play, in English or in French. In fact, when Bernhardt played *Fedora* in the United States in 1887, she did so only with Fanny Davenport's permission.⁴⁷⁶

Davenport was to play *Fedora* for five years almost uninterruptedly. She then acquired the rights to *La Tosca*, *Cleopatra*, and *Gismonda* in turn. *Fedora* and *La Tosca* were both critical and commercial successes. *Cleopatra* and *Gismonda* were both extremely successful financially, even though some critics found fault with the plays, or her performance, or both. Until the production of *Cleopatra*, as will be discussed below, critics were generally quite positive regarding her performances in comparison with Bernhardt. At the end of her opening run of *Fedora* in New York, the *Spirit of the Times* praised her performance by making a direct comparison with Bernhardt (whose performance of the role the critic had clearly not yet seen):

Miss Davenport has been too coldly praised for her performance of the heroine. Had any foreign actress played so grandly, the papers would have been full of her praises. It is admitted that *Fedora* is the best work she has done: but much more than this is true. We know of no other actress upon our stage who could play the part so splendidly. We doubt

⁴⁷⁶ Special Correspondent of the *Sunday Globe*, "Croffut's Letter," 30 December, 1883, 10, Proquest, 547993832. Hollis Street Theatre, "Farewell Tour," Display Ad no. 8, *Boston Daily Globe*, 4 April 1887, 7, ProQuest, 589604012.

whether Bernhardt, for whom the piece was written, can equal Miss Davenport in the third Act.⁴⁷⁷

During her second season in New York, the *Spirit* again praised both the play and Davenport:

“Fedora is the best of Sardou's dramas and no playgoer should neglect to witness it and admire

Miss Davenport's best acting.”⁴⁷⁸ And the Toledo *Blade*, reviewing a performance on tour, said:

There was in her entire impersonation a thorough conception of the intricacies of the character so skillfully drawn by the master hand that showed the perfect actress. The playwright touches the chords of the passions with a magic hand, and under Miss Davenport's incomparable interpretation they respond clearly and sharply.⁴⁷⁹

In 1887, after Bernhardt appeared in a French language version of *Fedora* in New York, the *Spirit* wrote that “After a careful study of Bernhardt in *Fedora*, we confess that we prefer Fanny Davenport in the difficult part of Sardou's heroine.” Another review from about the same time period concurs: “To ‘Fedora’ she gives an interpretation somewhat different from Bernhardt's and the originality is commented on in Davenport's favor in the comparison of the two actresses,” says a clipping from an unnamed paper found in the Harvard Theatre Collection. And while suggesting massive changes to the play itself, the *Spirit* said of Davenport's performance as La Tosca, “There is a general agreement that, as La Tosca, Miss Davenport surpassed herself and reached heights of fervent passion to which she has never before attained.”⁴⁸⁰ In the early days of her Sardou venture, Davenport's performances of Bernhardt's roles were hailed as artistic as well as financial successes.

Sardou's plays revolved around strong female characters subject to great romantic and sexual passions which they alone could control. *Fedora* was set in contemporary Russia and

⁴⁷⁷ [*Fedora*], 15 December 1883, *Spirit*, clipping in Robinson-Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴⁷⁸ “The Fedora of Miss Davenport,” *Spirit*, 1884?, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴⁷⁹ “Fanny Davenport's Fedora,” *Toldeo Blade*, 3 April [1884], clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴⁸⁰ [Bernhardt review], *Spirit*, 19 May 1887, clipping in Robertson Locke scrapbook, BRTC; “Fanny Davenport at Boyd's,” 1888?, clipping in “undated” file, Fanny Davenport Collection, HTC; [La Tosca], *Spirit*, 7 March 1888, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

France. The others were historical dramas. Except for Tosca, each Sardou role that Davenport played was a queen or princess, and Tosca is described as an imperious opera star who goes so far as to snap at the queen. All but Tosca are women in charge of men. And all are subject to the temptations of their own sexual passion, their anger, and in some cases, their pride. With the exception of Tosca, none are threatened with rape or are subjected to the blandishments of seduction, and Tosca is far from helpless. She manipulates Scarpia, who wishes to “possess” her, to his death by using her sexuality and emotional volatility. The danger these women find themselves in comes from within them. Most of the characterizations draw from myths and fantasies of “the insatiate and promiscuous woman,” the sexually powerful, the “maniacal and destructive woman,” and the hysterical woman discussed by by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and hinted at by Susan Glenn.⁴⁸¹ These plays found a wide and enthusiastic audience across the country during the 1880s and 1890s. Sardou’s heroines presented the negative behaviors of uncontrollable anger and jealousy or hysteria as both normal outgrowths of women’s changeable natures and as sites of power over men. It seems unlikely that either Davenport or her audience, female or male, recognized the essential misogyny of the roles. The popularity of Davenport’s productions, and of Sardou’s plays generally, bear witness, however, to a change in the way the larger culture was beginning to think about women and sexuality, and more importantly, the way in which women were beginning to think about themselves. No longer were they pure and chaste because they had no sexual feelings or thoughts. In the roles Fanny played, and the way in which she played them, these female characters faced their own sexuality and fought it, succumbed to it, or used it. In so doing, Davenport presented women fighting for their own agency and for

⁴⁸¹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 202-203. Also see in this volume, “Puberty to Menopause: The Cycle of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century America,” 190. See also Glenn, 20-21.

power over their own lives within the still-constricted or reconstricting ideal of womanhood and woman's place that was being played out in the press in stories about actresses' marriage, divorce, and return to work, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Of the four Sardou roles, only Davenport's last one, *Gismonda* (1894), approaches the all-encompassing ideal of the redemptive woman. At the moment her child falls into a tiger's den, *Gismonda*, Duchess of fifteenth-century Florentine Athens, offers herself in marriage as a reward to the man who saves her child, a prime example of redemptive motherhood. She of course expected this to be a man of her own class, but the savior of her child is Almerio, a lowly falconer. Having made her promise by swearing on the cross, she cannot rescind it and the Pope himself will not release her from it. Meanwhile, Almerio fights off pirates and becomes the people's favorite. As much as she begins to admire and even love him, she cannot bring herself to overcome her pride and marry so far beneath her. Finally she offers Almerio a one-night-stand at his hut if he will relinquish the full reward of marriage to her. On her way out of the hut that night, having discovered in Almerio a man "handsome, brave, passionate and true," as Sardou described him in a letter to his agent, Elizabeth Marbury, with a "spirit which is beyond anything she has ever known,"⁴⁸² *Gismonda* overhears her noble suitor and his man plotting to kill her son, as well as Almerio. She picks up the hatchet let fall by the man, and bashes in the head of her erstwhile suitor. Some critics professed themselves appalled by the brutality of the action, and most insisted that the murder was unwarranted. E.A. Ditmar characterized *Gismonda* as a woman whose "passions are base and uncontrollable... a beautiful and dangerous animal." Another *New York Times* critic felt it contained an "over-measure of brutality, lust, and rude

⁴⁸² Elizabeth Marbury to "My dear Miss Davenport", 14 January 189[4], HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

frankness of speech.”⁴⁸³ But *Gismonda* continued to attract audiences, in New York and on tour. It is possible that each night, when Gismonda killed the nefarious would-be fiancé who was intending to betray her by killing her child and taking command of the Duchy, Fanny Davenport was playing out the dreams of the many women in audiences across the country who still found themselves powerless to defend themselves, their children, and their property in the face of laws and traditions that continued to disempower them.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the post-Civil War years saw an increase in the popularity among men of all classes in the “sporting life” of which theatres, as well as gambling casinos and brothels, were an integral part. Wives and brides-to-be really did not know if the loving words and actions of their husbands and fiancés could be taken at face value. Yet most had to bet their lives on the assumption that they were. As becomes clear in reading Gilfoyle’s study of the commercialization of sex, in the homosocial society of the nineteenth century, men often formed a Chinese wall between their domestic and their extra-domestic lives. This Chinese wall is at the heart of Edith Wharton’s novel of late nineteenth-century society, *Age of Innocence*. Near the beginning of this novel, Newland Archer, about to be married, muses on the hypocrisy of most of the married men of his set and their ability to keep their wives ignorant of their love affairs and “other establishments.”⁴⁸⁴ Gismonda shares a predicament that many women in the audience probably found themselves in, or could easily imagine themselves in, and echoes the situation of *Fedora*, the first of the Sardou roles Fanny undertook.

In *Fedora*, the wealthy Princess Fedora Romanova follows Loris Ipanoff from St. Petersburg to Paris believing he killed her beloved fiancé, Count Vladimir, as part of a Nihilist

⁴⁸³ E.A. Ditmar, “The Theatrical Week,” *NYT*, 16 December, 1894, 10, ProQuest; “Miss Davenport as Gismonda,” *NYT*, 12 December, 1894, 4, ProQuest.

⁴⁸⁴ Gilfoyle. See particularly chapters 5, 6 and 7; Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (New York: D. Appleton, 1920; reprint, Collier Books, 1986), 43-46 specifically, but the entire novel generally; also see Grossman, chapters 8 and 9.

plot. She sets up a spy ring to keep track of Ipanoff and send information to Vladimir's father, who also wants revenge. She attends a Paris *salon* in order to meet him and seduce him into a trap through which he will be captured and returned to Russia to be killed. She sends information back to Russia that ensures his family will be persecuted, and their wealth and comfort destroyed. During all this, however, she is falling in love with Ipanoff, resisting her feelings until she learns from him, on the night the trap is to be sprung, that Vladimir was having an affair with Ipanoff's wife. Ipanoff has a letter in Vladimir's hand to prove it. This comes as a serious shock to Fedora, who had assumed all along that her fiancé loved her as she loved him. Ipanoff, following his wife to her assignation, was discovered by Vladimir, who shot at him. Ipanoff fired back in self-defense, killing Vladimir. Managing to elude the Russian police Fedora herself has arranged to arrest Ipanoff, the two lovers spend a fortnight of love together. But it all comes to an end, as she has known it must, when Ipanoff learns of his family's suffering and his mother's death. His faithful servant returns from St. Petersburg with the name of the spy who is responsible for this disaster: Princess Fedora. As one reviewer said, Ipanoff's "love for Fedora is forgotten in his frenzied wrath, and the woman dies by her own hand."⁴⁸⁵

The audience learns in the first scene what Fedora does not learn until Act III: that her fiancé was a "sporting man," interested in gambling and with an active illicit sexual life, wanting to marry her only for her money. Like many women in the United States, probably many in the audience, Fedora learns that she has wagered her life and fortune on the love and honor of this man who is completely false to her. Fanny Davenport's choice of plays seems to have been about presenting audiences with a vision of women who acted largely, and in some sense heroically, within circumstances that for them might be considered tragic.

⁴⁸⁵ "Plot of 'Fedora,'" *NYT*, 13 March, 1887, 5, ProQuest.

Davenport played *Fedora* for four years before entering negotiations with Sardou for *La Tosca*. During that period, she continued her search for new American plays with heroines larger than life, as her correspondence with actor Frederick Paulding reveals. “Dear Mr. Paulding,” she writes in March of 1887,

I am glad your play progresses so well and glad I shall soon be able to hear it we are in New York a week from next Monday 14th. I want the play of course intense and strong still with a poetic high strain in it for I could not follow *Fedora* with a mere melodrama – I trust there are poetical phrasings & sayings in the play – and that it breathes of humanity and Poetic love & sentiment I do hope it will suit me.⁴⁸⁶

Paulding had first contacted her about his plays in late 1886, and she had heard one already which, however, was “hardly a star part play,” as she says in this letter. The second play, also, must not have suited, because in late 1887, her manager-husband, Edwin Price, sailed for Paris to finalize design elements of the production of *La Tosca*,⁴⁸⁷ an arrangement, discussed later in this chapter, that was ironic, in light of the plotlines of *Fedora*, and later, of *Gismonda*.

Sardou’s *La Tosca*, which forms the basis for the libretto of Puccini’s opera, received mixed reviews as a play, and according to the *Spirit*, there was some discussion of banning it. The problem was Act IV, in which *La Tosca* allows the evil Scarpia to kiss her so that he gets close enough for her to stab him. “[T]he scene of a woman deliberately trafficking with a sensualist is even more disgusting in *La Tosca* [than in Maurice Barrymore’s *Nadjezka*],” moralizes the *Spirit*. “Cut out the entire Act, and the play will be cleaned, lightened and brightened.” In spite of the *Spirit*’s assurance that “This Act is not essential to the play, which is complete without it,” Fanny kept the play the way it was written. The *Spirit*, in this article, also questioned “whether reputable ladies will go to see the new theatre and the new play or not. Strike out the unnecessary and episodic fourth Act, and what is there to offend any lady’s

⁴⁸⁶ Fanny Davenport to Frederick Paulding, 10 March [1887], Houghton, HTC.

⁴⁸⁷ Edwin. H. Price to "My dear William", 24 November 1887, Firestone Library, Princeton University, William Seymour Collection, Letters Received.

modesty?"⁴⁸⁸ Ten days later, this critic expresses some surprise at the number of women at the Saturday matinee: "The matinee belongs to the ladies. If they were so affected by the attacks of the papers as not to attend that performance, there would be an end of La Tosca," he explains.

But on the contrary, we found the handsome house crowded last Saturday afternoon, and the ladies were largely in the majority. Moreover, many of the men left the theatre, after the notorious fourth act, and did not return, which showed what these wicked fellows had come to see. The ladies, although obviously shocked by the sensualities of Scarpia, remained until the final curtain fell.⁴⁸⁹

Women, it turned out, were extremely interested to see how Tosca manipulated the evil Scarpia. The *Spirit* then impugns the collective reputations of this audience of women by saying, "When we say ladies we mean that the audience was in dress, appearance and deportment above the average of respectability and fashion during Lent." Later in the review, he reports that "the ladies at the matinee, as on the first night, pronounced [Act IV] nauseating, disgusting, horrid," so apparently this critic is quite unsure whether the women he has seen in this audience are indeed the "ladies" he was so sure would repudiate the play, or whether they might be high-class prostitutes. The presence of well-dressed, well-behaved women at this play seems to confuse him. However, he does not give up the attempt to persuade Davenport to bowdlerize the play and spare the sensibilities of the sporting males in the audience. In order to bring home to Davenport the enormity of her mistake in presenting this scene, he reiterates, "We think that the fourth Act should be cut out bodily. It is not necessary to the story; the play would be stronger, better and cleaner without it." He then continues with a warning about the types of audience the play will and will not attract: "How can Miss Davenport play this act in the provinces, where she is a favorite, like her father before her, in the legitimate?" he asks, reminding her of the highbrow

⁴⁸⁸ . [La Tosca], *Spirit*, 7 March, 1888, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴⁸⁹ "La Tosca," *Spirit*, 17 March 1888, clipping in Robertson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

career track she had seemed to be following before she produced *Fedora*. “Here in New York,” he says,

it may attract a few men about town, who like to see how much wickedness can be permitted on the stage; but what will the provincials think and say of it and of an actress who takes part in it? There is absolutely no question that this fourth Act is nasty--not immoral, but disgusting.... Miss Davenport should get rid of it at once. Her explanation to Mario, in the last Act, that Scarpia has connived at his escape, is sufficient to fill up the gap. We urge her to try the experiment, at least.⁴⁹⁰

As far as has been possible to determine, Miss Davenport never considered eviscerating the play in this manner. When she brought *La Tosca* back to New York for a week the following year, the *Spirit* reported standing room audiences. Nevertheless, there was an attempt to turn the perception of the production into a lowbrow one: “Melbourne McDowell is now the Scarpia. He overacts the part and, to punish him, we suppose, Miss Davenport shakes him, so vigorously, after killing him at the supper, that his wig begins to wobble, much to the amusement of the gallery gods.”⁴⁹¹ Davenport had changed her death scene, and Tosca was now killed by soldiers after their discovery of Scarpia’s murder, rather than killing herself, a much stronger ending for a strong character. But Act IV was still in place. Why the critic of the *Spirit of the Times* campaigned so strongly at its début to have this act of *La Tosca* omitted is something of a mystery. Of all the New York papers, the *Spirit* was hardly the guardian of home and hearth. It shared the honor with the *New York Clipper* of being one of those papers that covered theatre in conjunction with horse racing, prizefighting, poker and the rest of the “sporting life,” one of the papers that the *New York Dramatic Mirror* had been founded to coneract. Perhaps this critic was simply afraid that the women in the audience would get ideas. Davenport played *La Tosca* until the year of her death, in towns and cities all over the country.

⁴⁹⁰ “La Tosca.”

⁴⁹¹ [La Tosca], *Spirit*, 19 January 1889, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

With *Cleopatra*, Fanny Davenport may have reached the zenith of her powers. In this spectacular production, Davenport presented the image of a woman so omnipotent that winds roar and trees fall at her command, and all men kneel at her feet. The effect was in large part Davenport's, not Sardou's. As she told a reporter,

In the incantation and storm scene, I am elevated where the audience can see me, and they can hear me, too, amid all the tumult of the storm. Bernhardt, admirable actress as she is, could not be heard in all that confusion, and so, instead of the Grand Temple of Isis, and the raging storm, she has a portico, and you look through a pillar or two out upon a landscape. The storm scene is all my own. It was my own idea, suggested by Sardou's brief stage directions, 'Storm approaches,' 'storm increases,' 'lightening increasing in violence,' &c. They did not have any storm scene in Paris as a feature of the play, and indeed Sardou wrote me that the resources of the French stage were inadequate to the production of a tempest in accordance with his ideas.⁴⁹²

And as she described it in a pre-production interview, the scene “ends with all on the stage prostrating themselves before Cleopatra, who stands majestically the central figure of the stage.”⁴⁹³ Here audiences saw a woman in charge of the world of men, as well as the world of nature.

So little of *Cleopatra* is Sardou's that Jerome A. Hart does not even mention it in his catalogue work, *Sardou and the Sardou Plays*.⁴⁹⁴ It was recognized to be mostly the work of Moreau with a few additions by Sardou. Indeed, when Davenport, with Melbourne MacDowell and her sister Blanche visited Sardou at his home in the summer of 1889 or perhaps 1890, to discuss the play, Moreau accompanied them.⁴⁹⁵ *Cleopatra* as Davenport produced it was in fact more of a spectacle than a drama, “costly and well-ordered,” according to the *Times*, rather than particularly exciting. “Such a series of stage pictures has seldom been seen here,” reported a

⁴⁹² "Cleopatra' on Her Art," *NYT*, 29 March, 1891, 11, ProQuest.

⁴⁹³ "The Story of the Play," *NYT*, 24 October, 1890, 1, ProQuest.

⁴⁹⁴ Jerome A. Hart, *Sardou and the Sardou Plays* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1913).

⁴⁹⁵ "Miss Davenport's 'Cleopatra'," *NYT*, 28 December, 1890, 13, ProQuest; for the visit to Sardou see Fanny Davenport to "My own Mother", 23 June 1890?, Firestone Library, Princeton University, William Seymour collection, Letters Received.

Boston paper, “and viewed as a spectacle, the play was perfection itself.”⁴⁹⁶ Viewed as an acting performance, however, some felt it was lacking. Again according to the *Times*, the scene in which Cleopatra, having been carried in to Antony’s quarters in a rolled up rug, overhears his conversation with his wife Octavia, was more technical performance than natural reaction: “Miss Davenport’s changes of attitude, gesture, and facial expression are very good indeed. Long experience has taught her just what to do in every theatrical emergency. But the strange charm, the thrill, that Bernhardt can put into such a situation is lacking here.”⁴⁹⁷ The script, says a Boston critic, was written only for Bernhardt and it could be heard in every line. “The play ought to have been entitled ‘Sarah Cleopatra,’” he says, for she is a “woman with ‘nerves’” and “a woman of moods,” willful and imperious by turns. “She is not infrequently hysterical, and on one occasion we see her throttling and wrestling a slave all around her throne room.” He calls the character “intensely modern,” possibly because she is a woman who acts out her anger, frustration, pain, and passion, rather than trying to control her emotions, covering them with cheerfulness. But because of this, says the critic, “she needs a Bernhardt to exemplify her attributes and characteristics.” Davenport has failed to realize the character because “she plays Cleopatra, not Sarah Cleopatra.”⁴⁹⁸

This is quite possibly true. Others must have criticized Davenport’s interpretation more harshly, and rather continuously, for in 1896 Fanny strongly defended both the play and her own interpretation of the role. In an interview entitled “Can Critics Err?” Davenport describes Cleopatra, not as the highly sexualized, semi-hysterical woman with nerves and moods of Bernhardt’s performance, but as a responsible adult leader of a nation with the best traits of the ideal woman:

⁴⁹⁶ “The New Cleopatra,” n.d. 1891, unidentified review in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁴⁹⁷ “Miss Davenport's 'Cleopatra'.”

⁴⁹⁸ “The New Cleopatra.”

That Cleopatra was a voluptuary is admitted, but in portraying her character I have endeavored to subordinate the passions which swayed her life, the sensuality with which she was possessed, to the higher qualities with which she was endowed.

She has been represented as a woman swayed only by passion, who gained and kept her power over men by appealing to the baser emotions alone. I do not consider this the proper conception of the character, for we learn from history that she was a woman of many accomplishments, of brilliant parts, one of whom we would to-day use the word 'smart.' She was an intensely clever woman. Plutarch tells us that 'she could easily turn her tongue like a many-stringed instrument, to any language that she pleased.' She learned many languages, though her kingly predecessors had not even taken the pains to learn the Egyptian language. If she devoted her days to pleasure, was nothing but a voluptuary, how then could she have won the time for the hard study which was necessary to gain the accomplishments which played so important a part in her attractiveness? Caesar and Anthony might have been attracted by a woman whose charms were her only magnets, but they could have been enslaved only by one whose mental endowments and intellectual accomplishments were worthy of their admiration.

Her interpretation imbues Cleopatra with intelligence and political ability, not just the ability to manipulate others using her sexuality. In a play in which, according to all plot descriptions, the focus is on the lead character's use of sensuality for political seduction, her own sexual passion, and old-fashioned jealousy of another sexual partner, Davenport elected to "play against type," as it is termed in theatre parlance.

Part of her playing against type was of course forced upon her by her size. While Davenport was no longer in competition with the slight, weak, innocent-seeming young leading ladies of her early career, such as Agnes Ethel, Clara Morris, or Sara Jewett, she had, by her choice of material if nothing else, placed herself in line for direct comparison with Sarah Bernhardt. And in the role of Cleopatra, she was also compared to Shakespeare's description of the queen of Egypt as the "serpent of old Nile," a line often quoted in reviews. Although she had lost quite a bit of weight in 1884, and seems to have kept much of it off, Fanny Davenport was never, even in her youth, what could be called thin or sinewy or serpent like, and in comparison with Bernhardt, she must have appeared enormous. Fanny therefore attacks this criticism head on:

As to her physique, who shall say? I saw the mummy in the British museum said to be that of Cleopatra, and it is not the form of a small woman, but is fully 5 feet 6 inches in height. Cleopatra must have been a woman of more than ordinary physical strength, for Plutarch tells of her dragging the dying Antony up to the windows of the tomb in which she had taken refuge. Again, if we are to believe historians, she led her armies to the field and her fleets to battle; she buckled on armor and in other ways comported herself as a mighty leader of a great people. In the scene with Antony, in the fourth act, she says, 'Now, let us talk as man to man.' That shows no womanly weakness, and is the manner of a woman who knew her power and knew also it was appreciated by the Roman.⁴⁹⁹

In other words, Davenport suggests, theatrical realism allows for, if not demands, a woman taller than the average, apparently stronger than the average, believable as a national and military leader. Antony, in contrast to contemporary carpers, appreciated Cleopatra not just as a "woman of physique," nor simply as a sensualist, but also as an intelligent and able woman who met men on equal terms in the business of her day. In *Cleopatra*, Davenport was presenting a model for the proud and independent woman who pursued a career in a man's field, as she herself was doing in managing her own touring company. It was only lack of new material on other heroic women that made Fanny return to Sardou for *Gismonda*.⁵⁰⁰

The *Cleopatra* production is also of importance because it brought to the forefront Fanny's considerable abilities as a theatrical producer and manager, a role she had been playing behind the scenes extremely successfully since she had left Daly's management in the spring of 1878. On the night of January 2nd, 1891, after the show was over, a fire started in the basement of the theatre, probably caused by faulty electric wiring, according to Harry Miner, the manager of the theatre. Within twenty minutes the Fifth Avenue Theatre was a roaring conflagration. Much of the damage was done by exploding gas cylinders under the stage that were used for the special

⁴⁹⁹ "Can Critics Err?."

⁵⁰⁰ From George Hoey to Fanny Davenport, 23 May 1892, itemized bill for receipt for "scenarios", HTC-Fanny Davenport collection. The "scenarios" for which Davenport paid Hoey \$50.00 were to be on the lives of Sarah Siddons, Helen of Troy, Medea, Zenobia, Boadicea, and Mrs. Abingdon, "with a view to writing a play on any one selected by Miss Davenport." Per a note from him of 10 November 1895, also in HTC, she apparently optioned one of them, but this was never produced.

effects of the Storm scene. By January 4th, arrangements were underway for a complete recreation of all scenery and costumes for the show.⁵⁰¹ The original sets and costumes had been produced in Paris and London. But according to the *Boston Transcript*,

To be obliged in this emergency to wait that length of time for the second production was out of the question. Instead, therefore, of communicating at all with her foreign agents, she at once set to work negotiating with American artists. The result was the employment, under her own personal and direct supervision, of some four hundred people, both in New York and Boston, who were given carte blanche as to expense, and who worked night and day on the contract. In just two weeks every detail was completed and "Cleopatra" so sumptuously mounted as to be pronounced far superior as a production to the original, by the general public, and by the most competent critics.⁵⁰²

Davenport's losses were estimated by other theatre managers and producers to be at least \$40,000, and she put the cost at \$55,000.⁵⁰³ These were immense sums in those days. Equivalents to 2009 dollars range between \$929,000 and \$37,800,000 at the low estimate of \$40,000, and between \$1,280,000 and \$52,000,000 at Davenport's estimate, depending on the multiplier used in conversion.⁵⁰⁴ Either way, few if any other women had made that kind of fortune by their own work, nor controlled business operations on this scale in those times. The fire and the remounting of *Cleopatra* had brought to everyone's attention the size of Davenport's operation and the fact that she was at the head of it.

Fanny Davenport, Manager and Producer

Fanny Davenport had been managing her own productions since 1878. In August of that year, she played a six-week pre-season at the Union Square Theatre in *Olivia*, an adaptation of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* that had played with success in London the previous

⁵⁰¹ "Two Theatres Burned Up," *NYT*, 3 January, 1891, 1, ProQuest; "Broadway's Great Fire," *NYT*, 4 January, 1891, 2, ProQuest.

⁵⁰² "Miss Davenport's Productions," *Boston Transcript*, n.d. 1896, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁵⁰³ "Broadway's Great Fire"; "Pulling Down the Walls," *NYT*, 5 January, 1891, 8, ProQuest.

⁵⁰⁴ Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to Present," *MeasuringWorth*, <<http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/>> (16 August 2010). See also the page titled "Choosing the Best Indicator to Measure Relative Worth."

season. The engagement was of the old-fashioned stock-star type, Davenport performing the star part, with the Union Square stock company supporting her,⁵⁰⁵ and it is more than likely that she received a share of the box office receipts. A letter from her to Augustin Daly some time soon after her father died asks for his advice regarding a contract with Lester Wallack, in which she states, "I think tis all wrong, absurd that he shall name an average for the business & the play only to run as long as it averages a certain amount," an arrangement that was (and remains) standard, and usually accompanies a schedule of the shares each participant is to have of the proceeds. Although the letter is about a contract with Wallack, with whom she never appeared, she says in the last line that "Palmer called a few moments ago himself but kindly told him I was out [*sic*]."⁵⁰⁶ A.M. Palmer, manager of the Union Square Theatre, would not have called personally unless he was interested in having her appear at his theatre, which she did the following August, remaining for six weeks. That she was an independent producer for this engagement, and not a part of the Union Square Theatre company, is indicated by a negative: years later, Palmer requested autobiographies from all those players who were well known when they arrived or rose to fame during or after they had been members of the Union Square Theatre company. He collected news articles on those, such as Clara Morris, who did not respond. Mrs. Davenport was asked and responded at length, but there is nothing in his collection by or about her daughter, except what she herself writes. Thus it is clear that Palmer did not consider Fanny Davenport a part of the company. Davenport was a free agent by the summer of 1878.

In October, she appeared in Brooklyn at Colonel Sinn's Park Theatre in *Olivia*, this time supported by the Park Theatre company, and reappeared there in March in *Pique* and *Divorce* (playing the emotional lead), again supported by the theatre's stock company. In April she

⁵⁰⁵ Odell, 10:580-581.

⁵⁰⁶ Fanny Davenport to "My dear Mr. Daly," n.d., 1877, Folger, Daly collection. That this was shortly after E.L. Davenport's death is indicated by the heaviest black border around the paper, nearly an inch.

appeared at the Grand Opera House, New York, also in *Pique*, finally supported by her own hand-picked company among whom was a young Ada Rehan.⁵⁰⁷ During most of her first season as an independent star, therefore, Fanny Davenport toured in the way stars such as Edwin Forrest, Charlotte Cushman, and her father had done, as an independent artist, not as the head of a company.

In August of 1879, Fanny married Edwin H. Price, who had been the romantic lead in *Olivia* at the Union Square.⁵⁰⁸ Whether he travelled with her during the season following *Olivia* cannot be ascertained, but he did not appear with her in Brooklyn or at the Grand Opera House. He certainly travelled with her after they were married, and performed with her as well; he is mentioned as a performer in the *Spirit* in early November.⁵⁰⁹

O.G. Bernard, Anna Dickinson's manager, found Price somewhat obstructive and a bit proprietary when he was trying to make contact with Davenport in Cincinnati later that month. When Bernard first attempted to make contact with Davenport, he was refused. "[Price] explained that when my first card was presented his 'wife' was dressing and did not recognize the name until the boy had departed with her message" wrote Bernard. "Innumerable excuses!!"⁵¹⁰ Bernard's use of quotation marks around the word "wife" indicates that he felt the use of this word to discuss one of the biggest stars of the day was odd, to say the least. It is both possessive and personal, and thus is out of place in business correspondence.⁵¹¹ When Price suggested the two of them meet in the hotel lobby, Bernard refused, but sent his own wife, who was invited up to their room. By sending his wife, he ensured that Fanny herself would receive

⁵⁰⁷ Odell, 10:723, 726, 596. It is in this production, the story goes, that Daly first saw Ada Rehan.

⁵⁰⁸ [Fanny Davenport Married], *Spirit*, 9 August 1879, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC. See also Odell 10:596.

⁵⁰⁹ "Miss Davenport," *Spirit*, 8 November 1879, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁵¹⁰ O.G. Bernard to Anna Dickinson, 19 November 1879, quoted in Stewart, 237.

⁵¹¹ Olga Nethersole's manager-husband, for instance, always discussed her as "Miss Nethersole" in business letters and letters to her fans. See Olga Nethersole, Letter to unidentified recipient, 1895, Hoblitzell, Letters/TA.

her, thereby opening personal communication between Bernard and Davenport. It would have been inappropriate, as well as rude, for her to have been seen by Price alone. Thus Bernard (and his wife!) managed an end run around Davenport's husband, making contact directly with her. It was Davenport that Bernard wanted to deal with, not Price.

Bernard also wrote to Dickinson that Davenport "carries 18 people in her company now, and freely admits it don't pay..."⁵¹² This is the first mention of a full travelling company that has come to light for Fanny Davenport, and at 18 people, it is a large one. At some point during this season, Price had stopped acting and become Davenport's manager. It is possible that she felt that with her husband managing, she would be able to travel with a full company, as she had when Daly had managed her tours. However, when Dickinson's play was finally acquired and arrangements were made for New York City, Price's role was reduced. It was "genial Dan Frohman" who gave the press the information on the "one hundred native-born Americans" hard at work upon Fanny's gowns for the production.⁵¹³ And after the opening, the *Spirit* asks, "why should Manager Frohman, who ought to know a good piece when he reads it, persist in putting An American Girl upon the stage...?"⁵¹⁴ Stewart's analysis of letters between Dickinson and Davenport makes it quite clear that Fanny, not Frohman, was in charge of the production; she was the director, dramaturg, scene designer, costume designer, and star.⁵¹⁵ But Frohman must have been a serious investor in the play, possibly paying for the scenery. Perhaps he handled the contracts with the theatre, as well as press relations. Fanny must have realized that husband or

⁵¹² Stewart, 237.

⁵¹³ [Miss Dickinson's comedy].

⁵¹⁴ "New York," *Spirit*, 22 September 1880, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁵¹⁵ Stewart, 233-257.

no, Price did not have the experience to handle an opening in New York. Price's role in the production seems to have been confined to dealings with Dickinson and Bernard.⁵¹⁶

Frohman did not remain involved with Davenport's company after the close of Dickinson's play, however. On tour, Price took over. But in 1885, a brief notice appeared saying that Frohman and Davenport had just signed a contract in which she was to appear in San Francisco for two weeks in *Fedora*, supported, not by her own company, but by Frohman's *May Blossom* company, then playing at the Baldwin Theatre,

...and she will receive for her services a large percentage of the gross takings.... The last time Miss Davenport appeared under Mr. Frohman's management was at the Fifth-Avenue Theatre, when she produced Miss Anna Dickinson's unfortunate piece called 'An American Girl.' In spite, however, of the very general slating which that piece received, Miss Davenport and Mr. Frohman both made money out of the presentation.⁵¹⁷

The *Spirit* makes the assumption that Davenport would be working on the sharing system with Frohman. However, that same season, he paid Modjeska a hefty weekly salary, \$1,750 plus carriages,⁵¹⁸ presumably keeping the largest share of the proceeds for himself. It is possible that for this brief period, Davenport may have been under a similar contract. She may have been exploring the idea of giving up the management of her own company, possibly preparatory to a separation or divorce, which took place three years later. For whatever reason she agreed to this two-week trip to San Francisco, however, she and Frohman never entered into a management contract again. The industrial family model was not for her—at least, not unless she was at the head of the “family.”

Under her husband's management, Davenport did extraordinarily well during the 1880-81 season. On January 21st, Davenport added the role of Marguerite Gauthier in *Camille* to her

⁵¹⁶ Stewart.

⁵¹⁷ "Gossip of the Theatres," *NYT*, 22 March, 1885, 14, ProQuest.

⁵¹⁸ Daniel Frohman, *Memories of a Manager: Reminiscences of the Old Lyceum and of Some Players of the Last Quarter Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1911), 115-116.

repertoire. She, or she and Price together, chose to open this play in St. Louis, two days before Sarah Bernhardt, on her inaugural tour, was scheduled to open in that city. For those who could afford two tickets, it would have been a prime opportunity to compare performances in the same role between the young and beautiful American and the French *tragédienne* whose progress across the Northern United States was being so well chronicled. For those who could not, Davenport's ticket prices were doubtless somewhat lower than Bernhardt's. At Bernhardt's opening in New York, top price for a single ticket at the box office had gone up to \$25, about ten times the usual top price, and people paid \$2.00 for standing room.⁵¹⁹ Prices for Davenport's shows never rose that high.

Davenport's tour crossed paths with Bernhardt's again in Detroit, and here Davenport herself became the rallying point for a surprisingly strong anti-French or perhaps simply pro-American show of nationalism. According to the *Mirror*,

... while the French artiste was duly appreciated, the American actress was forced to give an extra matinee to satisfy the demands of the public. It was thought that Bernhardt would attend this matinee, consequently the theatre was literally packed; but the French artiste remained away, because, Mr. Abbey said, she did not receive a special invitation. In the evening Miss Davenport was serenaded at the Russell House, where Bernhardt was also stopping. The band played ... the "Star Spangled Banner." Miss D. [*sic*] appeared at the window and kept time to the music with her hands while the latter air was being played. The compliment was quite overpowering, and she could only say to the large crowd beneath the window: "Thanks, my friends--a thousand thanks; I cannot say more--my heart is too full." The crowd cheered and the band played "Yankee Doodle." Miss Davenport again appeared at the window and said: "My friends, do not forget our neighbor—a stranger. Play the Marsellaise [*sic*] for her." Which the band did....Quite a spirited and significantly national episode. Good for the Detroiters!⁵²⁰

The mention of Davenport keeping time to the national anthem with her hands may be a reference to a report of Bernhardt doing the same at her opening night gala in New York,

⁵¹⁹ "The Advent of Bernhardt," *NYT*, 9 November, 1880, 1, ProQuest.

⁵²⁰ "Stirring Incident in Denver [Detroit]," *NYDM*, 19 March 1881, 6.

although on that evening, of course, the anthem played was the Marseillaise.⁵²¹ The report that Bernhardt expected a special invitation to the performance gives the impression that Bernhardt thought she was higher on the scale of status than Davenport (of whom, in 1881, she had probably never heard). Whether true or not, such a report would certainly have rubbed republican America the wrong way. The *Mirror's* wrap-up of Davenport's season in May reports that Davenport also played against Bernhardt in Cincinnati with "immense" houses, "Camille again being the *piece de resistance*. A special Sunday night performance was given to meet the heavy demands of the overflow from the matinee of the previous day."⁵²² Without further research into the theatres and communities of St. Louis, Detroit, and Cincinnati in this period, it is difficult to know how to interpret this behavior on the part of American audiences. It may have been rooted in populist sentiment: with ticket prices for Bernhardt so high, and with her reputation as a *tragédienne*, there may have been an element of populist revolt against the highbrow entertainment that a French language performance still suggests. Or perhaps there was some feeling that Bernhardt, with her multiple love affairs, bohemian ways, and lithe sexuality, threatened the American family. Skinner reports "a group of high-minded American mothers in Orange, New Jersey," who held a meeting to discuss "how to defend our country against this European *courtisane* who is coming over to corrupt our sons."⁵²³ Fanny Davenport, with all her beauty and "vital spirits," was squeaky clean and married, as well as American.

No matter the reason, Davenport's 1880-81 season was extremely remunerative. "[W]hatever doubt may exist in the minds of carpers as to the limit of her dramatic talent," said the *Mirror*, "she can justly lay claim to the position of being the best paying female star on the American stage today." As a producer and star, says the *Mirror*, she

⁵²¹ "The Advent of Bernhardt."

⁵²² "The Davenport Season," *NYDM*, 7 May 1881, 2.

⁵²³ Skinner, *Madame Sarah*, 155.

has carried plays upon her shoulders that would have wrecked the prospects of a less firmly established actress. Who else is there, in the whole list of names, which constitutes our profession, that could have placed a knock-kneed piece of dramatic trash like Anna Dickinson's *American Girl* upon something like a respectable footing? Fanny Davenport did this.⁵²⁴

The article goes on to outline her financial success with this and other plays in her repertoire.

Gross receipts for the entire season were reported to have been "somewhere in the neighborhood of \$128,000." Matinees, which belonged to the ladies, accounted for nearly \$26,000 of this, or 20%. "Taking it all in all," the *Mirror* concluded, "this record can scarcely be beaten by any female star in the country for the same period, and very few male stars can surpass it."⁵²⁵

Davenport toured at the head of her own company under the management of her husband for the next several years, first with her mix of classical comedies and emotional dramas, and beginning in 1883, with Sardou's *Fedora*. If an interview in the *Mirror* can be believed, she basically handed over all business operations to Price after obtaining the rights to *Fedora*:

How long my season will last, or where I go after that, I cannot say, except that Mr. Price tells me we only play in the large cities. In fact, I know very little of my business now. I used to know all about it before the season opened and arranged every detail. Now I engage my artists only, and think of my acting, and when I finish in one place, I take a carriage, drive to the train, travel to the next city, and play.⁵²⁶

The interview makes it seem like she is to be a lady of leisure, or at any rate, a woman who, like the ideal domestic woman, no longer worries herself over money and business matters. If true, as she was to discover, this was a mistake.

Fanny L.G. Davenport divorced Edwin H. Price in June of 1888. The following year, she married her new leading man, known professionally as Melbourne MacDowell. However, the case is not as open and shut as it first appears. According to the *Boston Herald*,

⁵²⁴ "The Davenport Season."

⁵²⁵ "The Davenport Season."

⁵²⁶ "Fanny Davenport Interviewed," *NYDM*, 21 April 1883, 10.

...the trouble between [Price] and the actress arose first from business differences. He went to Paris to get the play "La Tosca," and he took the precaution to buy it in his own name from Sardou, the author. This was because he had a suspicion that his wife might retire from conjugal partnership with him and try to sever their business relations at the same time. He did not propose to lose both the woman and the fortune.⁵²⁷

It is unclear exactly when Price went to Paris to buy the rights. Letters from Price to Davenport's brother-in-law, William Seymour, indicate that he did go to Paris in November of 1887,⁵²⁸ but as the play opened in New York in February of 1888, it is more likely that the purchase was made during 1886 or very early 1887. Obviously, however, if Price suspected in 1886 or early 1887 that Fanny "might retire from conjugal partnership with him," there were already serious problems in the marriage. Davenport's flirtation with Daniel Frohman's management in 1885 may have been a symptom of this. Not surprisingly, as the *Herald* continues,

When she learned that he was the legal owner of the play she was very angry, and at once declared that she would never live with him again. They separated virtually last autumn, though he continued to manage her business as a partner during the winter run of "La Tosca" in this city. At length she proposed a divorce and he agreed.

Although the entire family must have known about the affair, Price's letters to Seymour continue to presume upon a family and a homosocial relationship, suggesting what a good time the two of them might have on board ship with Harold Field (R.M. Field's son) if he were to travel with them, and offering to bring things from Seymour's wife, May Davenport, to "Bella" (Blanche Davenport) in Paris.⁵²⁹ Some time after his departure, Fanny wrote to Seymour as well:

Ned [Price] is expected back on the Elbe the 6th. Tell May the letter I wrote to Paris has to take to reach him [*sic*] so I am dreading what is before me bless you dear Boy for all your good & generous protestations to me I think I shall tread all before me for I will not live this wretched existence longer.... kiss May and Babie bless you all oh how I long for one day of your united bliss[.]⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ "Inner History of the Price-Davenport Divorce," *Boston Herald*, 24 July 1888, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁵²⁸ Price to William Seymour, 13 November, 1887; Price to "My dear William," 24 November, 1887.

⁵²⁹ Price to Seymour, 24 November 1887.

⁵³⁰ Fanny Davenport to "Dearest William", n.d. [1887], Firestone Library, Princeton University, William Seymour Collection, Letters Received.

The letter discusses possible scheduling at the Boston Museum for the following season, so she was also beginning to pick up the reins of her own management again. In order to regain control of her career, however, she had to purchase the rights to *La Tosca* from Price for \$10,000, even though the money Price had paid to Sardou had been earned by Davenport herself. "On receipt of that sum he was willing to release her from any sort of connection with himself," says the *Herald*. Price had behaved towards Fanny Davenport much as Count Vladimir had behaved towards Fedora, and Gismonda's noble suitor had behaved towards her: no matter her position or power, the woman was the property of the man, and her money and business interests belonged rightfully to him. Although her new husband, Melbourne MacDowell, had been in theatre for nearly a decade before she met him,⁵³¹ Davenport never gave him any business position within her company other than that of leading man.

At this point in her career, Davenport was travelling with a full company of between 18 and 26 performers and staff, plus all scenery for two separate Sardou plays, each in five acts, with the concomitant number of sets. A partial list of tasks required to keep such a tour running smoothly and profitably includes booking the entire route, and then making arrangements for: scenery and properties (props) transport; loading off the train and back on again; hire of incidental props and furnishings; hire, mounting and running of lighting additional to that contractually provided by the theatre; advertising over and above what the theatre was contractually bound to provide; press relations and provision of photographs, electrotypes, and other materials for printing purposes; advance printing and supply of posters; advance procurement of souvenirs for sale in the lobby; advance travel arrangements for the cast; nightly box office reckoning; weekly royalty reckoning and payment; weekly salary payments to cast

⁵³¹ "Wm. M. M'Dowell, Noted Actor, Dies," *NYT*, 20 February, 1941, 20, ProQuest.

and crew,⁵³² and this list does not include casting and negotiations with performers or theatre managers, rehearsals, or set and costume construction. In discussing management of a combination company, therefore, the question is not whether it was the star or the manager who fulfilled all these functions. It would be impossible for one person to do all this and more. The question is, to whom did everyone report at the end of the day and/or week? The manager? or the star?

Davenport and Price had separated publicly in May of 1888. That summer, the *Clipper* reported she was to go out to San Francisco, where she would appear “under Al. Hayman's management.” This time, however, she went with her full company, leading man Melbourne MacDowell included, playing *Fedora* and *Tosca*. Tally sheets show that Davenport and Hayman split the net proceeds on a seventy-thirty basis – 70% for Davenport and 30% for Hayman. In addition to playing in Hayman’s own theatre, Hayman put together a tour to San Diego, Northern California, and Portland, Oregon, in which “the company” (Davenport plus Hayman) took 80% and the managers of the presenting theatres received 20%. Hayman and Davenport then paid company salaries, transportation and other production costs out of their 80% and split the net net on the same seventy-thirty basis as above, Davenport receiving 70% and Hayman 30%.⁵³³ Davenport’s share under this contract ranged from a low of \$898 to a high of \$1,716, by no means as good a deal as the straight \$1,750 a week that Daniel Frohman had paid Modjeska in 1885. But the existence of the tally sheets in Davenport’s papers indicate that although Hayman may have managed the route and the travel, the company remained her company, under her control.

⁵³² This list is drawn from weekly tally sheets for the seasons of 1893-94 and 1897-98, found in the Fanny Davenport Collection, HTC, when the repertoire included all four Sardou plays. The list of tasks would be similar in 1889, although the magnitude would be somewhat smaller.

⁵³³ Journal of expenses, 1888, Firestone Library, Special Collections, Fanny Davenport Collection.

Davenport signed with Marc Klaw to manage her for the 1888-89 and 1889-90 seasons. In December of 1889, Klaw refused to sign a further contract, although he did continue to handle her booking schedule. No reason was given for this break.⁵³⁴ An incident in Minneapolis in April of 1889 may shed some light on the difficulties of managing Fanny Davenport. Because of illness “or for other reasons,” Davenport did not play four of the scheduled nights of her tour the third week of April. As manager, it is likely that Klaw would have had to make the loss good to the manager of the presenting theatre she was booked into. In addition, Davenport instructed that the performers were to receive only half their week’s salary. When two actors objected, she consulted her lawyer, who told her that “the members of the company were not compelled to take half pay, and could legally collect the full amount.” She then posted the following notice in the theatre:

Miss Davenport wishes to thank those members of the company who were so courteous, and willingly accepted the one-half week's salary paid them last week. This was done solely on the strength of very large railroad fares and excessive baggage. The ungentlemanly and discourteous conduct of Mr. Lotto and Mr. Williams necessitated Miss Davenport consulting of her lawyer how to act, who informed her that if anyone demanded full salary it should be paid. Any member of the company who claims the other four nights due him will communicate the facts to Mr. Willard and he shall be paid.⁵³⁵

It would not be surprising to learn that Mr. Lotto and Mr. Williams did not continue to work with Fanny Davenport. Just as Augustin Daly had done with so many of his company members, Davenport attempted to place her salary arrangements on a personal basis. After all, requesting salary contractually due could only be considered discourteous if the salary was in fact looked upon as a gift. Fanny Davenport’s approach to management was entirely of a piece with the patriarchal industrial family model, except that she was a woman. But for an outside

⁵³⁴ "Here and There," *Boston Daily Globe*, 6 May, 1888, 10, ProQuest; "Fanny Davenport's Management," *NYDM*, 11 January 1890, clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁵³⁵ "Trouble with Her Troupe," *Boston Daily Globe*, 25 April, 1889, 5, ProQuest.

management concern, particularly one presided over by a man who would help create the Syndicate, the monster of theatrical management firms, just a few years later, the question remained, who was in charge? the manager, or Fanny Davenport? The answer for Fanny Davenport had to be Fanny Davenport.

By the time Davenport's production of *Cleopatra* opened in late December of 1890, her company was "under the management of Marcus R. Mayer." This was a relationship that would continue through the 1892-93 season. But Mayer's management by no means meant that he handled everything and Davenport merely engaged her artists and thought of her acting. It is probable that he booked the tour schedule, and probably the transportation of cast and scenery. Exactly what else he was in charge of, if anything, is unclear. Also unknown is what Davenport paid him for his services. An April, 1891 playbill for *Cleopatra* lists Archie McKenzie as business manager, Chas. E. Cook as representative, and Frank Willard as stage manager. All of these men are identified as staff "for Miss Davenport," not for Mayer.⁵³⁶ Two bills of sale from the Brooklyn Knitting Co. dated in the fall of 1892 show that Mayer purchased men's and women's tights and fleshings to the tune of \$166.75. Whether this indicates he was a producer, or whether he was reimbursed is not noted,⁵³⁷ but the existence of the bill in Davenport's papers indicates the latter. An article on the day of the New York opening identifies Mayer as the "director of the tour" of the play, and says that he fell asleep in the auditorium during the dress rehearsal. Therefore he did not have the chance to delay the opening, which the technical

⁵³⁶ Program/Playbill for *Cleopatra*, Broadway Theatre, week ending April 25th, 1891, HTC-Playbills & Posters.

⁵³⁷ Brooklyn Knitting Co. to Mr. Marcus Mayer, 29 October 1892; Brooklyn Knitting Co. to Mr. Marcus Mayer, 2 November 1892; HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

difficulties of the dress rehearsal had prompted him to do.⁵³⁸ Falling asleep at a dress rehearsal is not the action of someone intimately involved with the production.

Starting with the 1893-94 season, Davenport was no longer under anyone else's management. She was named as manager of the Fanny Davenport Company in her contracts, and she filled out and signed all contracts herself. For a Western tour from November 1893 through January of 1894, her sharing percent was between 75% and 80% of the gross, with the exception of Al Hayman's Baldwin Theatre, where it was only 65% (70% of anything over \$8,000 in the week).⁵³⁹ In the fall of 1893, if not before, she had hired Ben Stern as her representative and business manager. Stern had been General Manager of Mayer's New York office.⁵⁴⁰ For Davenport, he travelled ahead of the company, taking care of advertising, confirming (or changing) terms with theatre managers, and booking the schedule for the following year, while Archie MacKenzie travelled with the company, organizing transportation, load-in and load-out from the theatres, and handling box office and payroll. In Ben Stern, Fanny Davenport found an excellent business negotiator and representative who professed himself "proud to receive such recognition from one whom I consider to be America's foremost star and attraction."⁵⁴¹ Stern and Davenport were in constant communication about everything from insurance on her productions to hotel arrangements for her and MacDowell, to an attempt to get Archie MacKenzie admitted to the Masons in spite of the objections of Mayer and Klaw's partner Abraham Erlanger, to the fight against the syndicate.

⁵³⁸ "Marcus Rip Mayer: An All-Night Sleep Produced by a Full-Dress Rehearsal," *NYT*, 27 December, 1890, 8, ProQuest.

⁵³⁹ Contract(s) between Fanny Davenport and various theatres regarding Fanny Davenport Company engagement, 14 January, 1893, in HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁴⁰ Letterhead, Marcus R. Mayer's International Theatrical Manager's Agency, Firestone Library, Fanny Davenport collection, Box 1.

⁵⁴¹ Ben Stern to "My dear Mrs. MacDowell," 14 June, 1894.

In December of 1894, Fanny Davenport opened *Gismonda*, which was to be her last Sardou production. By this time, Sardou had appointed Elizabeth Marbury as his agent in the United States, and she drove a hard bargain regarding fees and royalties. For the last six months of 1895, for instance, Davenport sent Marbury \$3,054 in royalties on *Gismonda*.⁵⁴² She had paid 100,000 francs, or \$10,000 for the rights to the play, similar to the amounts she had paid for *La Tosca* and *Cleopatra*.⁵⁴³ However, those fees had been all inclusive; no further royalties were due. Under the new arrangement, Davenport probably paid as much or more in royalties for this play within the course of two years as she had paid for the rights. Royalty payments of this magnitude were new, and had certainly not been built into Davenport's business model. And *Gismonda*, like *Cleopatra*, carried with it spectacular scenery and required a large cast. It was expensive to run, close to \$3,000 a week in expenses alone.⁵⁴⁴ In the summer of 1893, a financial panic had again led to an economic depression. More than six hundred banks closed before the autumn of 1893, and whole areas of the country found themselves in severe depression. In 1894, "Coxey's army" staged what might have been the first march on Washington. Later that year, the Pullman porters struck. The country did not recover quickly.⁵⁴⁵ For Fanny Davenport, as for many in theatre, the depression meant smaller houses and lower box office receipts. As long as Fanny was tied to Sardou's plays, she could not reduce her overhead. And for reasons not entirely clear, she found herself defending her rights to *Fedora*, purchased thirteen years previously, fending off royalty claims from her old manager, Mayer.

⁵⁴² From Elizabeth Marbury to Fanny Davenport, 18 June to 14 December 1895, itemized bill for Royalties, *Gismonda*, HTC, Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁴³ Victorien Sardou to Elizabeth Marbury, typescript of translations, 23 February, 1 April, and 9 April, no year, HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁴⁴ The Buffer to Fanny Davenport, 17 December 1896?, HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁴⁵ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 22, 91-92.

In order to free herself from Sardou and Marbury, Davenport signed a contract for a new play about Joan of Arc by an unknown playwright, Frances Aymar Mathews.⁵⁴⁶ But she was unable to let go of her commitment to historical realism, admired in *Gismonda*, defended in *Cleopatra*. This meant a huge outlay for scenery and costumes many months before any income could be expected from the play, and in fact, many months before Fanny had a complete script in her hands. Not until August was Fanny able to hold a reading of the play for her family. The result foretold the disaster to come. In a response to Davenport dated August 15th, Mathews suggests the “absolute silence” that greeted Fanny’s reading of the play for “a dozen people” was due to their being spellbound by her genius and her play. Or else they “banded together by a solemn oath & some fearful penalty, not to speak or make a sound.... No matter,” she says, “happily your family are not the Public.”⁵⁴⁷ True; they were not. They were almost entirely theatre professionals, including her brother-in-law, William Seymour, by that time one of Daniel Frohman’s leading stage managers (what we now call a director). Fanny should have listened to the silence, rather than her apparently clueless playwright. But by this time, she may have been too fully invested financially to be able to call off the production.

Further pressure was put on Davenport by the newly formed Theatrical Syndicate. As correspondence between her and Stern make clear, with the 1896-97 season, the Syndicate began to put serious pressure on theatre managers to book through that organization exclusively. A letter from Harry Rainforth, manager of the Grand Opera House in Cincinnati, apologizes to Davenport for his powerlessness:

I was surprised & very very sorry to learn from Ben of the conditions that exist. I assure you I hastened to do all I could to have the Syndicate let me book you directly. They

⁵⁴⁶ Frances Aymar Mathews, Thanksgiving Day 1896, HTC-Fanny Davenport Collection. Mathews received a downpayment of \$500 on Thanksgiving day from Davenport. However, the contract was not actually signed until some time in 1897.

⁵⁴⁷ Frances Aymar Mathews to Fanny Davenport, 15 August 1897, HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

would not – you see it was chiefly on account of the combinations that we went into the Syndicate. Many of them advising me to do so saying otherwise they might be compelled to book at some other house than mine – as they would certainly play with the Syndicate – and at present, without the syndicate I could not fill my time. I therefore must leave the adjustment of this matter to them.⁵⁴⁸

In a January letter, Stern had said that he thought “Cincinnati will stand by you,” and insist on booking Davenport independently,⁵⁴⁹ but as the letter above shows, Rainforth was unable to do this. The Syndicate, by negotiating exclusive booking arrangements with the first-class theatres, ensured that most first-class productions would book through them. And in order to book through the Syndicate, producers had to sign an exclusive contract to do so.⁵⁵⁰ The growth of the Syndicate ruptured personal relationships between theatre managers, stars, and their agents, and put the production company’s financial success into the hands of another organization, rather than into the hands of producers and stars such as Fanny Davenport.⁵⁵¹

To make matters worse, Davenport had been investing heavily in Chicago real estate for years.⁵⁵² But after a lengthy boom in that market, in 1896 prices sank so low that brokers could not even set prices for lots. By 1897, it was said in Chicago that ““real estate is a liability instead of an asset.””⁵⁵³ Fanny could not sell her real estate holdings even if she wanted to.

There is an undertone of panic in Fanny’s correspondence from late 1896 on. In November, she received a letter from her attorney, Judge Dittenhoefer, thanking her for her payment, and adding that

⁵⁴⁸ Harry Rainforth to Miss Davenport, 11 February 1897, Firestone Library, Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁴⁹ Ben Stern to Mrs. MacDowell, 27 January 1897, HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁵⁰ Bernheim, 50.

⁵⁵¹ Letters from Stern to Davenport in January and February of 1897 include extremely interesting background information regarding the mobilization of major stars against the Syndicate. Unfortunately there is not room here to go into this in any detail.

⁵⁵² Numerous letters from Hamilton B. Bogue, Real Estate, can be found in HTC-Fanny Davenport collection. The earliest is 1887.

⁵⁵³ Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 2000), 180-181.

We certainly would not have called upon you just at this time, if necessity did not compel. There are hardly any rich people now a days; the richest plead poverty, and you don't know how hard it is for us to get any money....I am as much an "earner" as you call it, as you are, and... no one to whom I owe money will listen to my demand, that he should ask "the rich man for his bill", and let me, "the earner", alone....I send you herewith all the papers I have relating to the Mayer "Fedora" claim, and I agree with you and think that you will be able to arrange the matter to your entire satisfaction without "running up lawyer's fees."⁵⁵⁴

Feeling squeezed from all sides, no longer feeling wealthy, she had looked for one expense that might be controllable, and thought she might do without an attorney! (Within a few months, Dittenhoefer was again in charge of the *Fedora* problem.⁵⁵⁵) In January of 1897, she proposed to Eugene Tompkins, manager of the Boston Theatre, that he loan her an unspecified amount of money by paying bills for the creation of her new show, to be premiered in his theatre. Tompkins refused the offer.⁵⁵⁶ In August, Ben Stern, her business manager, wrote to say that he could "manage to let you have \$1500 and may arrange the entire \$2000 if Grand Trunk pay me soon.... Dont you worry about ready money I will fix that for you and it will be a pleasure to aid you at all times."⁵⁵⁷ And on her deathbed in September, 1898, she signed over to her brother-in-law eleven acres of land in back of her mansion in South Duxbury, Massachusetts, in lieu of repayment for a loan of \$1,000.⁵⁵⁸

Matthews' play, *A Soldier of France*, later called *St. Joan*, and sometimes just *Joan*, involved a huge expense, and was a huge failure. In her brief biography of Davenport, Susan S. Cole writes that "the public refused to accept the buxom Fanny as Joan."⁵⁵⁹ But the problem was much greater than that. In fact, "The First-Nighter," whose long, pointed, and highly critical

⁵⁵⁴ A.J. Dittenhoefer to "My dear Mrs. MacDowell", 10 November 1896, Firestone Library, Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁵⁵ A.J. Dittenhoefer to Mrs. McDowell, 13 August 1897, HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁵⁶ Eugene Tompkins to Miss Davenport, 29 January 1897, Firestone Library, Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁵⁷ Ben Stern to to Mrs. MacDowell, 12 August 1897, Firestone Library, Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁵⁸ Contract(s) between Fanny Davenport and William Seymour regarding mortgage loan, 26 September, 1898, in William Seymour Collection, Letters Received, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

⁵⁵⁹ Cole, "Davenport," 194.

review will be further quoted below, found nothing wrong with Davenport's appearance. "Miss Davenport has been grossly abused by certain portraits and paragraphs that have come to my notice since her reappearance on the scene of her earlier successes," he says at the end. "She has still the figure of a Cleopatra if not of a Chian, her voice is clear and at times melodious, and time has dealt more kindly with her face, I fancy, than with my eyes."⁵⁶⁰ Her physical appearance was not the problem.

Fanny's acting and production style may have been a problem. In an encomium written by Montgomery Phister some time between the opening of *Joan* and Fanny's death, appears the following tribute to this play:

Her 'Joan d'Arc,' though it failed as a drama, was the finest creation of her genius, indeed, of that of any American representative of dramatic art of this or any other time. No more splendid and beautiful presentation was ever made upon the modern stage. Its wealth and beauty, ponderous, almost, in its extravagance, won the astonished praise of the best masters and critics of the stage.⁵⁶¹

The word "ponderous" betrays Phister's actual experience. As beautiful as the staging was, the show was heavy, and slow. The *New York Times* reviewer mentions Davenport's "usual deliberation of speech and quiet, impressive gesture of head and swing of arm," calling her characterization "phlegmatic," and the entire production "restful," with "no spasms of emotion."⁵⁶² Somewhere around *Cleopatra*, it seems, Davenport became so weighed down by the pageantry, and the size of her characters that the plays stopped moving physically. Pageantry had been mentioned in reviews of *Gismonda* as well, but with it, shock and some awe at the

⁵⁶⁰ The First-Nighter, "At the Play: 'Joan of Arc' at the Fifth Avenue Theatre," 3 February 1898, unidentified clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁵⁶¹ Montgomery Phister, "Montgomery Phister Talks of Fanny Davenport and Her Art; of Her Truth and Realistic Force, and of Her Greatness as a Producer of Plays," 12 March [1898], clipping from unknown newspaper in Fanny Davenport papers, HTC.

⁵⁶² "Fanny Davenport as Joan," *NYT*, 1 February, 1898, 6, ProQuest.

brutality of the play's action.⁵⁶³ When this pageant-like production and acting style was used for a play that had no real spine or action in it, the result was ponderous.

The major problem with *St. Joan* was that Matthews had constructed the main character on the model of a stage heroine of another age. In addition, she did not understand how to structure a play. In a letter early on, Matthews wrote that Joan's character involved "the willing sacrifice of her own personal safety" for others "and such sacrifice was her motto." About the first act she pleaded with Davenport, "please agree with me that it must involve a self-sacrifice on her part or it loses its strength."⁵⁶⁴ Fanny had not played a truly self-sacrificing woman since *Camille*—and Marguerite Gauthier is a fallen woman whose self-sacrifice comes at the end of the play, as an act of contrition and catharsis. Truly self-sacrificing one-dimensional heroines of the sort Matthews created are characteristic of early nineteenth-century melodrama, not the theatre of the turn of the century.⁵⁶⁵ Worse, "The First Nighter" reports that, "...surfeited by the excess of 'that' for which every notable stage-hero in town is made to struggle at night and matinees—tired of 'that' resisting attacks of drink, seduction and rape," he was looking forward to seeing "a play built upon something less earthy than 'that'!...Alas! for my credulous hopes." This critic reports that, according to Matthews, the Dauphin Charles VII had conceived a passion for Joan which he pursues throughout the play. Finally, in the dungeon, he:

offers her life, escape, freedom, glory if she will—But to the condition, which he fairly hisses at her, the poor, sweet child answers again: "not that—not that." So she went to the stake because—according to Frances Aymar Matthews' invertebrate version of the affair—she would not surrender "that."⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³ "Miss Davenport as Gismonda."

⁵⁶⁴ Frances Aymar Mathews to Dear Lady Joan, 30 December 1896, HTC-Fanny Davenport collection.

⁵⁶⁵ David Grimsted, *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater & Culture 1800-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968; reprint, 1987), 172-174.

⁵⁶⁶ First-Nighter.

Matthews, in an effort to make Joan “womanly,” as the playbill apparently described it, gives Joan some “bad moments when she confides to the moon that she, too, has occasional thoughts of love, passion, embracing arms, of ‘that,’ in short.”⁵⁶⁷ Frances Aymar Matthews had turned Joan of Arc into a bourgeois young woman of melodramatic virtue with motives harking back to the self-sacrifice of a good seventy years previous, and no connection to the spirituality for which she was eventually to be made a saint.⁵⁶⁸

Fanny Davenport collapsed in the middle of March while playing *Cleopatra* in Chicago. Her condition then was so serious that her sisters and brothers, as well as her family doctor, were called to her bedside, and the tour, of course, was cancelled. After a few weeks, she rallied enough to return to her summer home in South Duxbury, Massachusetts.⁵⁶⁹ When the new season began, she sent Blanche Walsh out with her husband in the Sardou plays,⁵⁷⁰ presumably to bring in some money, and to fulfill what bookings Stern had been able to make and keep. For a while it seemed that she might recover, but she suddenly took a turn for the worse, and died on September 26th, 1898. A lock of her hair is in a paper envelope in the Firestone Library in Princeton with a note on the front saying:

Lock of hair cut by me from my aunt Fanny Davenport’s head in her room at Melbourne Hall, South Duxbury – a little after noon on the twenty-seventh of September in the year 1898. She lying on a bier at foot of her bed – Having left us at ten thirty the night before – Monday the twenty-sixth 1898.

May Davenport Seymour⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷ First-Nighter.

⁵⁶⁸ A “cause” for beatification of Joan had been opened in 1869. She was beatified in 1909 and canonized in 1920. Herbert Thurston, “St. Joan of Arc,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), *New Advent*, (17 Aug. 2010) <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08409c.htm>>.

⁵⁶⁹ Cole, “Davenport,” 194; May Davenport to My own Loved Ones, 29 March 1898, Firestone Library, William Seymour collection, Letters Received.

⁵⁷⁰ [Ben Stern re Fanny Davenport], 10 September 1898, unidentified clipping in Robinson Locke scrapbook, BRTC.

⁵⁷¹ William Seymour papers, Box 66.

Fanny Davenport's choice of playwright for this venture, and her death so soon after its astonishing flop, replaced her considerable accomplishments with failure in the eyes of the world, and masked her importance on the theatrical landscape of her time with a reputation as an unsuccessful Bernhardt also-ran. This has been unfortunate not just for her reputation but for theatre history and the study of the history of women in nineteenth century theatre. Whether she would have been able to recover financially, had she recovered physically, and adjust her theatrical style to the new requirements, is of course unknowable. But what she did do, working within and around the circling ideals of womanhood during her era, was remarkable.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined female performers in New York in the last third of the nineteenth century, and their dialogue with what Ellen Donkin has called the “circling ideas of womanhood.” The circling ideas of the nineteenth century have been identified by many previous scholars as aspects of domestic ideology, including redemptive womanhood, sexual chastity or purity, domesticity (cheerful housekeeping), and subservience towards the male head of the family. Although domestic ideology has been framed by many historians as a white, business- or middle-class phenomenon, there is much evidence and analysis to support the contention that some aspects of domestic ideology, particularly the idea of redemptive womanhood, had currency across class, racial, and cultural boundaries. This study of a large population of female performers as women living within this ideology along with their female audience throws light on how female performers built their careers by utilizing aspects of domestic ideology along with changes in the ideas of womanhood that had been stimulated in large part by the experience of the Civil War.

Analysis of my database shows that theatre in New York City was more open to women coming into the profession from the working and lower-middle classes than theatre in Great Britain was during the nineteenth century. But surprisingly, women from this background did not represent the majority, nor even a very large proportion, of entrants to the theatrical profession during this period. Until the post-Civil War period, slightly more than half of female performers came from theatrical families as determined by their fathers’ occupations, and an extremely high percentage of these women had mothers who had been performers (between 70% and 100% depending on the decade in which they were born). By the 1889-90 season, the percentage of actresses in New York who had mothers who had been performers remained high, at 69%. But

only 26% had fathers with any connection to the business. Most entrants to the profession by 1890 came from families in which the father was a professional or a business executive. And by that year, there were in total more female performers from the business and professional classes than from theatrical families. This influx or even invasion of young women from the upper middle class, which was accompanied by the founding of the middle-class trade paper, the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, had important consequences for the culture of the theatrical field and for the ways in which women from theatrical backgrounds presented themselves.

One of the results of the change in class background was that women from theatrical backgrounds attempted to present their family backgrounds as of the middle- or business class, rather than as theatrical. And whether as a result, or simply because the Civil War experience had begun to change the circling ideas of womanhood, the reasons women gave for entering theatre also began to change in the decades after the War. In the beginning of the century, most women who entered theatre said they did so for reasons related to redemptive womanhood, or self-sacrifice—to support parents or children, or to rescue a husband. Women who entered the business after the war were much more likely to say, or to give the impression, that they entered the profession as a life choice—they wanted a career and they wanted it to be in theatre. Even women who had entered theatre well before the war tended to reinvent their family backgrounds by the end of the century, to give the impression that they had made a choice to embark upon a career in theatre. By the end of the century, the “whim” of the middle-class girl who acted upon her “invincible desire” to go on stage became the accepted causative model, and women who had entered for other reasons—including many who came from theatrical families—tried to give the impression that they, too, came from a comfortable middle-class background in which their whim to go upon the stage had been supported by understanding parents.

No matter what their family background, however, female performers were continually in dialogue with those portions of domestic ideology that required chastity and purity, especially because of the old reputation of actresses as prostitutes. By the 1870s, the convention of setting aside an area in the theatre for prostitutes to conduct business (the “guilty third tier”) had been virtually eliminated from both elite and popular-priced theatres for approximately two decades. But the putative connection between performing and prostitution became an issue that was publicly discussed in the press with the entry into the profession of young women from the professional and business classes. In their own defense, female performers from these classes, or those who wished to portray themselves as such, often felt they had to defend the reputation of actresses, and of the theatre as a profession, from those who continued to insist on the essential immorality of the theatre.

Another of the circling ideas of womanhood, much older than domestic ideology but incorporated within it, was that of female subservience or submissiveness. Expectations about female behavior based on the domestic ideal, particularly the expectation of subordination of female agency to male agency, came into conflict with the newer identification of self that U.S. women, and particularly middle-class women, had developed during the Civil War. This new woman found herself independently responsible to the state for her own ideas and actions. No longer were her public activities subsumed within those of the males associated with her.

The collective experiences of the Civil War, combined with the need for many women to support themselves in the market place, contributed to a new spirit of independence among women that was exemplified by the assumption of independence of action by new female stars. The new type of theatrical manager, who ran theatrical companies on an industrial family model, found this inconvenient, as these women began to dictate their terms of engagement. The cultural

discomfort with the idea of the independent businesswoman was almost literally played out on the public stage as theatrical managers utilized a new interpretation of contract law to hold female performers to standards of exclusivity that male performers did not have to meet. It was also reflected in an increasing concern with divorce rates in the United States, and a concomitant increase in press coverage about divorce among female performers.

In spite of these problems, many women in theatre, being women of their time, were able to utilize domestic ideology to their career advantage. For example, Georgia Cayvan constructed a public image of herself that fulfilled the highest moral and behavioral demands of domestic womanhood, and apparently lived her life that way, as well. She was rewarded with the adulation of the female audience of Daniel Frohman's elite Lyceum Theatre during the 1880s. She utilized the pulpit her standing gave her to proselytize for issues women in her position felt were the important ones: the redemptive nature of theatre and drama, the educational opportunities it provided young women, and the need for women in her audience to accept and welcome the actress as a respected member of society. "Aunt" Louisa Eldridge combined redemptive womanhood with the newer notions of women's civic responsibility, as well as the patriotism born of the Civil War and post-Reconstruction attempts to knit the country back together. Using these old and new elements of the circling ideas of womanhood, she created a public character that assured she would be considered when producers were casting roles in her line of business. She also gained some influence in institutions that directly affected the theatre culture of New York City, such as the Actors' Fund and the Professional Woman's League.

In contrast to most of the women examined in this dissertation, both as a group and individually, Fanny Davenport did not build her career around the ideals of redemptive womanhood, nor, with the exception of her early years with Augustin Daly, did she place herself

in a subordinate position relative to male managers. And even with Daly, her correspondence shows, she understood her worth and demanded full recompense. Although by the end of her too brief life she was being talked of as representative of an older style of acting, her life and career looked forward to newer roles for women as sensual beings and as professionals. Contrary to expectations of women's behavior, even with the expanding tenets of domestic ideology, Fanny Davenport became an independent producer-director of one of the largest touring combination companies of her time. Yet as became a middle-class lady, she never gave the impression of flying in the face of convention. Her private life remained closed to the press. She kept her reputation as a woman clean both before and after her marriage to Price, and news of her divorce from him was accompanied by good and cogent business reasons. Her success enabled her to live an elite lifestyle that her actor parents would never have been able to imagine. She had indeed reinvented herself.

Because becoming an actress in the early part of the nineteenth century is known to have been transgressive, and because so much attention has been focused on the formation of domestic ideology in the early part of that century, a great deal of scholarly energy has been spent on examining the most radically transgressive performers of the century, such as Charlotte Cushman, Sarah Bernhardt, and Eva Tanguay. The message of this approach has been that outright transgression was the only sensible response to domesticity and redemptive womanhood, and that such women are the only women who have anything to teach us. Yet the vast majority of female performers during the nineteenth century built their careers within, rather than in spite of, domestic ideology, even though they did not remain within a home. They were as affected by the changes in society and culture after the Civil War as were the women in their audiences, and as affected as were women from other walks of life who worked outside their

homes. As a group, they were a lightning rod for discussion of the growing independence of women generally. They were as important to theatre culture and the culture of the United States after the Civil War as were the women who rebelled against the limits of the domestic ideal, and as important as those who upheld it. To a very great extent, they shared the ideals of domesticity with the women around them. By the end of the nineteenth century, they were of the culture, not outside it.

Appendix I

DIFFERENCES IN CENSUS DATA COMPILATION FIGURES

Albert Auster, in *Actresses and Suffragists*, uses the data in Janet Hooks' report as evidence of the growth in the field, supporting his rationale for his study.⁵⁷² Indeed, it is his book that originally directed me to the Hooks report. But in what appears to be a case of scribal error, Auster uses the 1890 raw figure of 4,652 from Table I.2 in the main text as his figure for 1880. This figure has recently been quoted by Susan A. Glenn in her *Female Spectacle, the Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*.⁵⁷³ With Glenn's quotation, and the tendency of scholars to quote each other, there is reason to believe this will become an accepted figure, and with it the misleading and indeed confusing idea that the number of actresses increased more than six fold in ten years and remained flat for the next ten. The real figure of 2,027 is surprising enough. However, it is not the raw number that is of significance, but the growth rate within the profession and as a proportion of working women. The increase from 780 to 2,027 women in the entertainment field represents a growth rate of 159% in just ten years.

A far greater discrepancy is that between Hooks' figures, which are used above, and the figures Benjamin McArthur uses. McArthur, using statistics from Alba Edwards' *Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States, 1870-1940*, gives a figure of 6,374 actresses in 1900, asserting that in this year they "comprised 43 percent of the acting profession, a far higher percentage than in the other leading professions."⁵⁷⁴ According to Hooks, whose figures are also based on Edwards' report, women in 1900 represented just 16.6% of workers in the entertainment industry.

⁵⁷² Auster, 31.

⁵⁷³ Glenn, 13.

⁵⁷⁴ McArthur, 30.

The differences stem from changes in the way census data were recorded and published between 1900 and 1940, with attempts to adjust for this. Not only did industrial and occupational categories grow and change from decade to decade, but instructions to enumerators changed, and the census enumeration form itself changed in 1910 to allow for greater differentiation between occupational activity and the industry in which the person was working.⁵⁷⁵ Finally, in 1940 the Census Bureau changed its classification system from one based on industrial classification to one based on occupational activity. Because of all of this, according to both Hooks and Edwards, it is difficult to make valid comparisons between industries or occupations from census to census, even before 1940.⁵⁷⁶ “The types of work covered by each of the 1940 occupation classifications frequently differ from the types covered by the same or similar classifications used in 1930 and previous censuses,” says Hooks. Adjustment factors were created by government statisticians, but, “before applying the adjustment factor it is often necessary to group a number of occupations in earlier censuses to make the earlier figures comparable with those in 1940.”⁵⁷⁷

Writing in 1947, Hooks was interested in quantifying trends in the growth of women in the labor force just before World War II so that with the 1950 census it would be possible to see “the extent to which women are entering ‘men’s work’ or are expanding in the fields in which they always have worked;...the degree to which the needs of the population for goods and services depend upon formal employment activities by women; and ... the economic needs and abilities of women as evidenced by their occupational distribution at various periods.”⁵⁷⁸

Edwards’ compilation provides comparative figures for “Total Gainful Workers” and “Male

⁵⁷⁵ Alba M. Edwards, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 Population, Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States, 1870 to 1940* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 87-89.

⁵⁷⁶ Hooks, 12-14; Edwards, 87-89.

⁵⁷⁷ Hooks, 13.

⁵⁷⁸ Hooks, 2.

Gainful Workers” from 1870 through 1930, but only provides information on women for 1900 and 1930.⁵⁷⁹ Hooks did the missing math and regrouped occupational statistics for women back to 1870, the first decade for which compiled statistics on women’s occupations were published. This rearrangement enables comparisons across seven decades. It is possible to see, for example, that contrary to McArthur’s statement that actresses represented a higher proportion of women in their field than in any other field in 1900, women already represented 65.9% of people in the field of teaching by 1870, and 73.5% in 1900.⁵⁸⁰

The difference between the two sources is significant, as tables A1 & A2 below reveal.

Table A1: Edwards v. Hooks--Comparison of Data, All Workers in Entertainment Field

Occupations, 1940 classification	<u>Hooks</u>			<u>Edwards</u>		
	<i>Census years</i>	1880	1900	1910	1880	1900
Actors/Actresses						
Athletes				4,812	14,708	28,297
Dancers and chorus girls			52,847			
Showmen					16,572	20,096
Sports instructors and officials	7,506	35,183			unknown	unknown
Motion Picture projectionists						
Proprietors, Managers and officials, theatres and motion pictures			11,775	2,604		11,332
Proprietors, Managers and officials, misc. amusement & recreation (Hooks); Keepers of pleasure resorts, race tracks, etc. (Edwards)	1,543	7,563	19,493		3,385	2,929
TOTALS:	9,049	42,746	31,268	7,416	34,665	62,654

Sources: Data from Hooks, Table IIB, "Occupations of all workers 1870 to 1940," 224, 248 note 159; Edwards, Table 11, "Gainful Workers...by Occupation and Sex, 1930 and 1900, with the occupations...according to the classification of 1930," 135.

⁵⁷⁹ Edwards, table 8 (111); table 9 (119); table 11 (135).

⁵⁸⁰ Hooks, 159. To discount this field, as McArthur does in his endnote (241, #3), by separating the small number of female college professors and presidents from all other teachers misstates the data, and naturalizes women as teachers below this rank. In fact, women did not hold a majority of teaching positions at any level until the Civil War, and the low level of remuneration he mentions in his note was due to the fact that the salaries paid women were half or less of those paid to men, not because the positions were originally less prestigious.

Hooks' figures are larger in every category. There is a difference of nearly eight thousand people or 18.7% between Hooks' figures for 1900 and Edwards' in table A1, but a difference of just

Occupations, 1940 classification <i>Census years</i>	<i>Hooks</i>			<i>Edwards</i>		
	1880	1900	1930	1880	1900	1930
Actresses				na	6,374	19,200
Athletes						
Dancers and chorus girls			26,825		388	1,495
Showmen					unknown	unknown
Sports instructors and officials	1,983	6,785				
Motion Picture projectionists						
Proprietors, Managers and officials, theatres and motion pictures			1,078	na		1,032
Proprietors, Managers and officials, misc. amusement & recreation (Hooks); Keepers of pleasure resorts, race tracks, etc. (Edwards)	44	308	1,261		95	997
TOTAL:	2,027	7,093	29,164	na	6,857	22,724

Sources: Data from Hooks, Table IIA, "Occupations of women workers 1870 to 1940," 208 and 240, note 8; Edwards, Table 11, "Gainful Workers...by Occupation and Sex, 1930 and 1900, with the occupations...according to the classification of 1930," 135.

236 women, or 3.3%, in table A2. Figuring growth rate and percentage, therefore, is a question of which men to include in the mix. Presumably Hooks included in her re-classification groups that Edwards, making comparisons only through 1930, left elsewhere. That the difference is in the "sports instructors and officials," and "motion picture projectionist" categories is only a guess, as neither these categories nor anything close appear with the theatrical listings in Edwards' tables.

Finally, McArthur specifically limits his study to "actors of the legitimate stage." In his explanation of his 1900 percentage, he states, "actresses and chorus girls would have made up by far the largest percentage of the category... 'actresses and professional show-women'." Here he includes chorus girls and dancers in the "legitimate" category. He then states that "the category

‘actors and professional showmen’ would have included more performers *outside* the realm of the legitimate—professional athletes, balloonists, *dancers*, for example” [emphasis mine], excluding male dancers and any chorus boys from the legitimate.⁵⁸¹ Separating “showmen” and “show-women” from the larger category of actors and actresses in 1900, as Edwards’ table 11 allows us to do, we find that the 388 “show-women” represented just 5.7% of non-proprietor women in entertainment, whereas the 16,572 “showmen” represented a whopping 53% of non-proprietor men in entertainment. By excluding 53% of the men from his calculations, McArthur significantly increases the proportion of women within his definition of “legitimate” actresses. Suggesting that “there was probably greater divergence in the male category between the enumeration and the actual number of actors” does not aid his argument, unless he were to suggest and accept that there was a huge (and provable) divergence between the enumeration and the actual number of female performers of any ilk. In addition, it is probably untrue, as has been discussed in the text.

Using Edwards’ data for 1900 rather than Hooks’ does show that actresses, dancers and chorus girls in 1900 represented 43% of all actors and actresses, dancers and chorus performers. When one adds in the show-women and showmen, however, all of whom are likely to be embodied performers in front of an audience (circus performers and various vaudeville and variety acts), women represent only 19.8% of performers in 1900, which remains lower than Hooks’ figure of 22.4% in 1880. Subtracting the proprietors of places of amusement only makes the difference greater. Using the result of such subtraction as the total N for 1880, performing women would then represent 26.4%, rather than 22.4%, of people in human performance-related entertainment in 1880, compared to 19.3% in 1900. The data support my contention that the largest growth rate in the number of women employed as performers in the entertainment field

⁵⁸¹ McArthur, x, footnote 1, p. 241.

between 1870 and 1940 took place in the ten years between 1870 and 1880, and it was in 1880 that women made up the highest proportion of workers in the field that they would make up for at least the next sixty years.

Appendix II

OCCUPATIONAL/EMPLOYMENT BREAKDOWN

For my own analytic purposes, as well as for comparison with Baker, Sanderson, and McArthur, I have included the following occupations as members of the Theatrical profession. This group remains the same across all comparisons, and represents those parental occupations that I identified during my research in clippings files and newspapers:

Acrobat	Playwright
Actor	Producer-Director
Actor-Manager	Stage Manager
Ballet Master/Mistress	Stage Mother
Business Manager (theatrical)	Stagehand-Construction-Painter
Circus	Theatre Manager
Clown	Theatre Treasurer
Composer	Theatre Administration
Costume-Wardrobe	Theatrical Agent
Dancer	Theatrical Press
Equestrien/ne	Variety Singer
Minstrel	Vaudeville
Music Director-Conductor	Vocalist
Musician	

Musicians are included under Theatrical pursuits because of the performative and rehearsal aspects of the field, and because of the vast range of musical outlets, large numbers of which included theatrical productions. A young person might easily be exposed to theatre through a musical parent's performance.

For comparison with Sanderson and Baker, I have arranged my Employments table in the groups below. This breakdown is based upon the table in Sanderson's Appendix 1 – "The Social Origins of the Acting Profession in England 1880-1980" (329). He does not say how he came to make these divisions; my assumption is they come from British census reporting classifications. As noted in the text, because in the United States, and particularly in the nineteenth century, aristocratic status depended both on wealth and on how long the family had possessed the wealth, I have grouped wealth and aristocracy with the Professions, although this creates a rather broad category as far as wealth and privilege are concerned. (Tables: I.6, I.7, I.8)

Professional & Gentry

Aristocratic/Wealthy background	Lady
Clergy	Lawyer
Diplomat	Military Officer
Doctor	Politics
Explorer/Inventor	Teacher-Professor

Commerce and Industry

Agent-Sales
 Business
 Chemist/Druggist
 Construction-Own
 Factory Supervisor
 Engineer – Civil
 Industrialist

Inn/Saloonkeeper
 Trade-Merchant-Large
 Trade-Merchant-Small
 Wholesale trade

Artists and Literary Pursuits

Architect
 Artist
 Editor-Publisher
 Journalist/Writer
 Music Teacher
 Music-Voice Teacher
 Photographer
 Speaker-Activist

Clerical and Lower Sales

Retail Clerk-Shop Girl
 Clerk-Other
 Civil Servant

Artisan/Manual

Artisan
 Dentist
 Domestic Servant
 Dressmaker
 Laborer-“Hand”-Transit-Factory Worker
 Journeyman Mechanic
 Military-Sergeant down
 Nurse

For purposes of comparison with McArthur’s tables, I have arranged my employments in the groups below. Again, because in the United States, and particularly in the nineteenth century, aristocratic status depended both on wealth and on how long the family had possessed the wealth, I have grouped wealth and “aristocracy” with the Professions. (Table I.10)

Professional/Wealthy:

Architect
 “Aristocracy”/Inherited wealth
 Artist
 Business
 Clergy
 Diplomat
 Doctor
 Editor-Publisher
 Engineer-Civil
 Explorer/Inventor

Industrialist
 Journalist-Writer
 “Lady”
 Lawyer
 Military Officer
 Music Teacher
 Politics
 Teacher-Professor
 Trade-Merchant-Large

*Managerial/Small Trade/Proprietors/**Civil Service:*

Chemist/Druggist
 Civil Servant
 Factory Supervisor
 Photographer
 Restaurateur
 Trade-Merchant-Small
 Wholesale trade

Clerical, Sales and Service

Agent-Sales
 Boarding House Keeper
 Clerk-office, etc.
 Domestic Servant
 Inn/Saloonkeeper
 Nurse
 Retail Clerk-Shop Girl

Skilled workers:

Artisan-small
 Construction-Owner
 Dentist
 Dress maker
 Journeyman Mechanic

Semi-skilled/Unskilled

Laborer-Hand-Transit-Factory Worker
 Military-Sergeant down

Farmers and Farmers wives

For my own purposes, in an attempt to study class, not just occupation, I have arranged my employments in the groups below. (Tables I.9, I.11, I.12, I.18)

Professional/Wealthy:

Accountant
 Architect
 Aristocratic/Inherited Wealth
 Artist
 Author
 Banker-Broker
 Business
 Clergy
 Diplomat
 Doctor
 Editor-Publisher
 Engineer-Civil
 Explorer/Inventor
 Gambler
 Industrialist
 Journalist-Writer
 Lady
 Lawyer

Military Officer
 Music Teacher
 Music-Voice Teacher
 Politics
 Speaker-Activist
 Teacher-Professor
 Trade-Merchant-Large

<i>Middle-Class-White-Collar/Small Proprietor:</i>	<i>Working Class-Artisan/De-skilled</i>
Agent-Sales	<i>Artisan/Service</i>
Chemist/Druggist	Artisan-small
Civil Servant	Boarding House Keeper
Clerk-Other	Criminal
Construction-Owner	Domestic Servant
Dentist	Dressmaker
Middle Manager	Factory Supervisor
Non-MD Doctor	Farmer-Owner
Photographer	Farmer's Wife
Restaurateur	Inn/Saloonkeeper
Secretary/Assistant	Journeyman Mechanic
Trade-Merchant-small	Laborer-Hand-Transit-Factory Worker
Undertaker	Midwife/Nurse
Wholesale trade	Military-Sergeant down
	Milliner/Hatter
	Piecework at Home
	Police
	Prostitute-Madame
	Retail Clerk-Shop Girl
	Tenant Farmer
	Waitperson

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Libraries and Archives

Firestone Library, Princeton University
Fanny Davenport Collection
William Seymour Collection

Folger Shakespeare Library
Augustin Daly Letters and Papers

Harry Ransome Center, University of Texas/Austin

Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University (HTC)
ALS files
Boston Museum Letters
Fanny Davenport Collection
Playbills and Posters
Union Square Autobiographies

Mount Holyoke College Library, Archives & Special Collections (MH)

Museum of the City of New York
Fanny Davenport Box

New York Historical Society (NYHS)

New York Public Library of the Performing Arts (NYPL-PA)
Billy Rose Theatre Collection (BRTC)
Music Division (Mus. Div.)

Patten Free Library, Bath, Maine, History Room (PFL)

Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University
Clara Morris Diaries

Newspapers and Periodicals

Boston Globe
Frank Leslie's Illustrated News
New York Clipper (Clipper)
New York Dramatic Mirror (NYDM)
New York Times (NYT)
New York Tribune

Commercial Online Databases:

Ancestry.com

Primary Sources

- Anderson de Navarro, Mary. *A Few Memories*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896.
- Billings, John S., M.D. *Report on Vital and Social Statistics in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890*. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1896.
http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1890a_v4p2-06.pdf.
- Bureau of the Census U.S. Department of Commerce. *Special Report: Marriage and Divorce 1867-1906*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909.
- Brunsmann, Howard G., ed. *Census of Population: 1950*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953.
<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/21983999v2p1ch1.pdf>.
- Cayvan, Georgia. "The Stage and Its Women." In *World's Congress of Representative Women*, edited by May Wright Sewall, 179-188. Chicago and New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1894. <http://www.archive.org/details/worldscongressof00worluoft>.
- Daly, Augustin and Joseph Francis Daly. Correspondence of Augustin Daly and Joseph F. Daly and documents serving for memoirs, 1858-1899. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
- Daly, Joseph Francis. *Life of Augustin Daly*. New York: Macmillan & Co., 1917.
<http://www.archive.org/details/lifeofaugustinda00daly>
- Davenport, Fanny Lily Gypsy. *Woman's Work Upon the Stage*. Unpublished manuscript in Fanny Davenport Collection, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library.
- Dunlap, William. *A History of the American Theatre*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. London, 1833.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=w5RxeuUVDjEC>
- Eastman, Mary F. "The Education of Woman in the Eastern States " In *Woman's Work in America*, edited by Annie Nathan Meyer, 3-53. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1891. Reprint, Arno Press, 1972.
- Edgett, Edward Francis. "Edward Loomis Davenport, a Biography." New York: The Dunlap Society, 1901.
- Edwards, Alba M. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 Population, Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States, 1870 to 1940*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943.
- Frohman, Daniel. *Daniel Frohman Presents: An Autobiography*. New York: Claude Kendall & Willoughby Sharp, 1935.
- . *Memories of a Manager: Reminiscences of the Old Lyceum and of Some Players of the Last Quarter Century*. New York: Doubleday, 1911.

- Hopkins, Pauline E. *Peculiar Sam; or, the Underground Railroad*. Facsimile of the Manuscript in the Library of Congress. In *African American Theatre: Out of Bondage (1876) and Peculiar Sam; or, the Underground Railroad (1879)*, edited by Eileen Southern. New York: Garland Publishing, 1994.
- Jones, Mrs. W.G. (Julia Wagstaffe). *Sketch of the Life of Mrs. W.G. Jones*. Handwritten, 1875. Miscellaneous Subjects. New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections.
- Logan, Olive. *Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes: A Book About 'the Show Business' in All Its Branches*. Philadelphia and Cincinnati: Parmelee & Co, 1870.
- Ludlow, Noah M. *Dramatic Life as I Found It*. St. Louis, 1880.
<http://www.archive.org/details/dramaticlifeasif00ludl>.
- M.M.C. "A Leaf from Memory's Table." In *The Messenger-Bird Circular and catalogue of the Brooklyn Female Academy with the ... annual commencement exercises*, 61-67. Brooklyn, 1850.
- Marcosson, Isaac, and Daniel Frohman. *Charles Frohman: Manager and Man*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1916.
- Modjeska, Helena. "Woman and the Stage." In *The World's Congress of Representative Women*, edited by May Wright Sewall, 164-175. Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894. <http://www.archive.org/details/worldscongressof00worluoft>.
- Morris, Clara. *Life on the Stage, My Personal Experiences and Recollections*. New York: McClure, Phillips & Co, 1901.
- . *Stage Confidences: Talks About Players and Play Acting*. Boston: Lothrop Publishing Company, 1902.
- . "Woman in the Emotional Drama." In *The World's Congress of Representative Women*, edited by May Wright Sewall, 175-179. Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894. <http://www.archive.org/details/worldscongressof00worluoft>.
- Mowatt, Anna Cora. *Autobiography of an Actress; or, Eight Years on the Stage*. Boston: Ticknor, Read, and Fields, 1854.
- Patterson, Ada, and Victory Bateman. *By the Stage Door*. New York: Grafton Press, 1902.
- Skinner, Otis. *Footlights and Spotlights: Recollections of My Life on the Stage*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1924.
- Willard, Frances E., and Mary A Livermore, eds. *A Woman of the Century: Fourteen Hundred Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*. Buffalo, Chicago, New York: Charles Wells Moulton, 1893.

Winter, William. *Vagrant Memories: Being Further Recollections of Other Days*. New York: George H. Doran & Co., 1915.

Secondary Sources

Abel, Marjorie, and Nancy Folbre. "A Methodology for Revising Estimates." *Historical Methods*, no. 4 (1990). Academic Search Complete.

Agosta, Lucien L. "Morris, Clara." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 669-673.

Alexander, Ruth M. "'We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters': Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850." *Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (1988): 763-785.

Allen, Robert C. *Horrible Prettiness, Burlesque and American Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

Aron, Cindy Sondik. *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service, Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Attie, Jeanie. *Patriotic Toil, Northern Women and the American Civil War*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Auster, Albert. *Actresses and Suffragists: Women in the American Theater, 1890-1920*. New York and Philadelphia: Praeger, 1984.

Baker, Michael. *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, Croom Helm Social History Series. London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1978.

Bank, Rosemarie K. "Drew, Louisa Lane." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 230-233.

———. *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Banner, Lois W. *American Beauty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Barker, Barbara. *Ballet or Ballyhoo, the American Careers of Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli and Giuseppina Morlacchi*. New York: Dance Horizons, 1984.

Barnes, Eric Wollencott. *The Lady of Fashion, the Life and the Theatre of Anna Cora Mowatt*. New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1954.

Barrett, Daniel. "Florence, Malvina Theresa Pray." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 299-301.

- Barzel, Ann. "Elizabetta Menzeli." *Dance Chronicle, Studies in Dance and the Related Arts* 19, no. 3 (1996): 277-288.
- Baym, Nina. *Woman's Fiction, a Guide to Novels by and About Women in America 1820-1870*. 2nd ed. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Bernheim, Alfred L. *The Business of the Theatre*. New York: Actors' Equity Association, 1932.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Field of Cultural Production, Or: The Economic World Reversed." In *The Field of Cultural Production, Essays on Art and Literature*, edited and introduced by Randal Johnson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Braxton, Celia. "'Home, Sweet Home': *The Drunkard*, Domesticity and the New Theatrical Audience." *New England Theatre Journal* 17, (Winter 2006): 15-34.
- Brown, Gillian. *Domestic Individualism, Imagining Self in Nineteenth Century America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990.
- Burge, James C. *Lines of Business: Casting Practice and Policy in the American Theatre, 1752-1899*. New York: Peter Lang, 1986.
- . "Sinclair, Catherine." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 792-794.
- Butsch, Richard "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences." *American Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1994): 374-405.
- Cary, Diana Serra. "Crabtree, Lotta." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 170-173.
- . "Howard, Cordelia." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 448-450.
- . "Janis, Elsie." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 467-470.
- Cohen, Patricia Cline. *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Cole, Susan S. "Davenport, Fanny Lily Gypsy." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 192-195.
- Cooley, Edna Hammer. "Women in American Theatre, 1850-1870: A Study in Professional Equity." Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1986. ProQuest (AAT 8620759).
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

- Cutter, Barbara *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels, the Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003.
- Davis, Peter A. "From Stock to Combination: The Panic of 1873 and Its Effects on the American Theatre Industry." *Theatre History Studies* 8 (1988): 1-9.
- Davis, Tracy C. *Actresses as Working Women, Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- . "The Theatrical Employees of Victorian Britain: Demography of an Industry." *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 18, no. 1 & 2 (1990): 5-34.
- Degler, Carl N. *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- . *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*. 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1984.
- Donkin, Ellen. "Mrs. Siddons Looks Back in Anger: Feminist Historiography for Eighteenth-Century British Theatre." In *Critical Theory and Performance*, edited by Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, 276-290. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.
- . "Shaw, Mary." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 784-789.
- Dublin, Thomas. *Transforming Women's Work, New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Felheim, Marvin. *The Theater of Augustin Daly*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956.
- Fugate, Liz. "Crothers, Rachel." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 180-185.
- Gagey, Edmond M. "Cayvan, Georgia Eva." In *Notable American Women, 1607-1950; a Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Edward T. James, 314-315. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Gamber, Wendy. *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997.
- Glenn, Susan A. *Female Spectacle, the Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Giesberg, Judith Ann. *Civil War Sisterhood, the U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000.

- Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992.
- Ginzberg, Lori D. *Women and the Work of Benevolence, Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Griffen, Clyde, and Sally Griffen. *Natives and Newcomers, the Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Grimsted, David. *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater & Culture 1800-1850*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968. Reprint, 1987.
- Grossman, Barbara Wallace. *A Spectacle of Suffering: Clara Morris on the American Stage*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009.
- Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women, a Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Hart, Jerome A. *Sardou and the Sardou Plays*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1913.
- Hartnoll, Phyllis, ed. *Oxford Companion to the Theatre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951.
- Henderson, Mary C. *The City and the Theatre*. 2nd edition. New York: Backstage Books, 2004.
- Hooks, Janet M. *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*. Vol. 218, Women's Bureau Bulletin. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947.
- Hoyt, Homer. *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933. Reprint, Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 2000.
- Huff, Mary Helen. "‘That Benefit Racket:’ Women and the Benefit in New York Theatre, 1840-1875." Ph.D. diss., Graduate Studies University Center, City University of New York, 2000.
- Jasmin, Luc, M.D., Ph.D. "General Paresis." U.S. National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>.
- Johnson, Claudia D. *American Actress, Perspective on the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984.
- . "That Guilty Third Tier: Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century American Theaters." *American Quarterly* 27 (1975): 575-584.
- Juhnke, Janet. "Irwin, May." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 456-459.
- Kessler-Harris, Alice. *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

- Kleinfield, H.L. "Cushman, Charlotte Saunders." In *Notable American Women, 1607-1950; a Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Edward T. James, 422-424. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/Lowbrow, the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Levine, Susan. "Labor's True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the Knights of Labor." *Journal of American History* 70, no. 2 (1983): 323-339.
- Lindesmith, William. "Westley, Helen." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 918-920.
- Marra, Kim. *Strange Duets, Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1914*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2006.
- Massey, Mary Elizabeth. *Bonnet Brigades: American Women and the Civil War*. New York: Knopf, 1966.
- Merrill, Lisa. *When Shakespeare Was a Woman, Charlotte Cushman and Her Circle of Female Spectators*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- McArthur, Benjamin. *Actors and American Culture, 1880-1920*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984. Reprint, University of Iowa Press, 2000.
- McCarthy, Kathleen D. *Women's Culture, American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- McConachie, Bruce A. *Melodramatic Formations, American Theatre & Society, 1820-1870*. Edited by Thomas Postlewait, *Studies in Theatre History and Culture*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1992.
- Mullenix, Elizabeth Reitz. "'So Unfemininely Masculine': Discourse, True/False Womanhood, and the American Career of Fanny Kemble." *Theatre Survey* 40, no. 2 (1999): 27-42.
- Odell, George C.D. *Annals of the New York Stage*. 15 vols. Vol. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. New York: Columbia University Press, 1927 to 1945. Reprint, 1970.
- Pam, Dorothy S. "Exploitation, Independence, and Solidarity: The Changing Role of American Working Women as Reflected in the Working Girl Melodrama, 1870-1910." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1980. ProQuest, (AAT 8027918).
- Park, Roberta J. "Physiology and Anatomy Are Destiny!? Brains, Bodies and Exercise in Nineteenth Century American Thought." *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (1991): 31-63. www.la84foundation.org/SportsLibrary/JSH/JSH1991/JSH1801/jsh1801d.pdf
- Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements, Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

- Peterson, Jane T. "Wood, Mrs. John." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 925-928.
- Philadelphia Museum of Art. "Museum History." <http://www.philamuseum.org/information/>.
- Phillips, Roderick. *Putting Asunder: A History of Divorce in Western Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Plotnicki, Rita M. "Rehan, Ada." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 739-741.
- Preston, Katherine K. "'Dear Miss Ober': Music Management and the Interconnections of Musical Culture in the United States, 1876-1883." In *European Music and Musicians in New York City, 1840-1900*, edited by John Graziano, 273-298. Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2006.
- Riley, Glenda. *Divorce: An American Tradition*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Roberts, Vera Mowry. "Keene, Laura." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 489-495.
- . "Logan, Olive." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 552-555.
- Robinson, Alice M., Vera Mowry Roberts, and Milly S. Barranger, eds. *Notable Women in the American Theatre, A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989.
- Rothman, Sheila E. *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Ruggles, Eleanor. *Prince of Players, Edwin Booth*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1953.
- Sandage, Scott A. "Gender and the Economics of the Sentimental Market in Nineteenth-Century America." *Social Politics* 6, no. 2 (1999): 105-130.
- Sanderson, Michael. *From Irving to Olivier, a Social History of the Acting Profession in England 1880-1983*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.
- Sawyer, Raymond. "Anderson, Mary." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 23-27.
- Schultz, Jane E. *Women at the Front, Hospital Workers in Civil War America*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Schwartz, Donald J. "Russell, Lillian." In Robinson, Roberts, and Barranger. *Notable Women In The American Theatre*, 761-764.

- Sklar, Kathryn Kish. *Catharine Beecher, a Study in American Domesticity*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1976.
- Skinner, Cornelia Otis. *Madame Sarah*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966.
- Silber, Nina. *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- . *Gender & the Sectional Conflict*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Smythe, Ted Curtis. *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003.
- Soltow, Lee, and Edward Stevens. *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States, a Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Stansell, Christine. *City of Women, Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860*. New York: New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.
- Stewart, Stacey A. "Nothing Ladylike About It: The Theatrical Career of Anna Elizabeth Dickinson." Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2004. ProQuest (AAT 3125444).
- Thurston, Herbert. "St. Joan of Arc." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08409c.htm>.
- VanderVelde, Lea S. "The Gendered Origins of the Lumley Doctrine: Binding Men's Consciences and Women's Fidelity." *Yale Law Journal* 101, no. January (1992): 775-852.
- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 151-174.
- Wener, Kenneth, M.D. "Gumma." U.S. National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>.
- Wharton, Edith. *The Age of Innocence*. New York: D. Appleton, 1920. Reprint, Collier Books, 1986.
- Wiebe, Robert H. *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.
- Woody, Thomas. *A History of Women's Education in the United States*. 2 vols. Vol. I. New York: Science Press, 1929. Reprint, 1966, Octagon Books.
- Yee, Shirley J. *Black Women Abolitionists, a Study in Activism, 1828-1860*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992.