

**Citation for published version:**

Janice Norwood, 'Picturing Nineteenth-Century Female Theatre Managers: the Iconology of Eliza Vestris and Sara Lane', *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 33 (1): 3-21, February 2017.

**DOI:**

<https://doi.org/10.1017/10.1017/S0266464X16000592>

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## **Picturing Nineteenth-Century Female Theatre Managers: the Iconology of Eliza Vestris and Sara Lane**

Not far apart in London's Kensal Green Cemetery are the burial places of two pioneering figures in nineteenth-century theatrical history. The headstone marking Eliza Vestris's resting place has gone, so now her grave is only identifiable because it abuts that of her second husband (Charles Mathews Junior), but the timeworn, urn-topped pedestal dedicated to Sara Lane and her spouse still stands. The condition of the memorials serves as a reminder of the transient nature of celebrity and how public identity is contingent on social factors. In this article I explore the role of iconology in creating and maintaining the two women's public images. Examination of how Vestris and Lane were portrayed in a range of portraits and cartoons not only reflects differences in the women's individual characters and experiences, but also has more general significance in revealing how such images were in turn shaped by nineteenth-century attitudes towards women in the theatrical professions and in society. My analysis focuses on the significance of gender difference, following Linda Nochlin's assertion that:

representations of women in art are founded upon and serve to reproduce indisputably accepted assumptions held by society in general, artists in particular, and some artists more than others, about men's power over, superiority to, difference from, and necessary control of women, assumptions which are manifested in the visual structures as well as the thematic choices of the pictures in question.<sup>1</sup>

Such assumptions are frequently unacknowledged and may be further complicated by subconscious attitudes towards class. In addition, I draw on Norman Bryson's semiological approach to painting. For Bryson, 'painting is bathed in the same circulation of signs which permeates or ventilates the rest of the social structure' and thus is both generated by and forms part of the contemporary discourse.<sup>2</sup> I apply this theory to the portraits of Vestris and Lane, interpreting them as sign vehicles conveying socially constructed codes. Central to my discussion is a focus on the dynamic between the women and the intended recipients of these signs, and an exploration of the degree to which the women had agency over their public representation.

To briefly recount what the women have in common and thus why they make an informative comparison, both made their debuts as singers and subsequently became known for their breeches and comic roles; during periods when theatrical management was almost exclusively confined to men both went on to run theatre companies in London (Vestris at the fashionable Olympic, Covent Garden, and the Lyceum, and Lane at the Britannia in the East End); and both continued to perform on stage themselves during their managerial years. They fall into the category of celebrity defined by Chris Rojek as ‘achieved’, that is their status, at least initially, is due to accomplishment in their chosen field.<sup>3</sup> Yet for the actress, there is a long history of equating any rise to prominence with sexual availability. Kimberly Crouch’s assertion that in the eighteenth century actresses could present themselves either as prostitutes or as aristocratic women has been contested by Laura J. Rosenthal, who claims the greatly expanded range of performance and print entertainments available in the urban cultural market widened the options, with ‘the theatre offer[ing] a third possibility of glamorous, independent woman with a mixed sexual reputation.’<sup>4</sup> In the nineteenth century the iconology of Vestris and Lane demonstrates this multiplicity. The pairing of these particular women is presented here as illustrative of the diverse and changing nature of images of the female theatre professional rather than as an embodiment of a polarized and antithetical binary.

### **Vestris as a Public Figure**

Lucia Elizabeth Vestris (née Bartolozzi, 1797-1856) undertook her first professional engagement in 1815 singing opera at the King’s Theatre, London. At this point she was married to the French dancer Armand Vestris but the marriage dissolved the following year. Her career took off in 1819 when she played the cross-dressed title role in William Moncrieff’s burlesque opera *Giovanni in London* at Drury Lane. The production was a commercial success, but reaction to Vestris’s performance was polarised. Typical of those who were outraged was a reviewer for the *Theatrical Inquisitor* who censured Vestris for agreeing to play the role of the libertine, declaring it ‘a part which no female should assume till she has discarded every delicate scruple by which her mind or her person can be distinguished’.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the diary of Henry Crabbe Robinson, who attended the performance on 13 April 1822, counteracts the suggestion of provocative licentiousness: ‘Mrs Vestris is a fascinating creature and renders the Don as entertainingly as possible and at the same time there is an air

of irony and mere wanton and assumed wickedness which renders the piece harmless enough.<sup>6</sup> The ballyhoo surrounding the production and the sexual ambivalence of her portrayal, which was the first of many breeches parts, served to fuel intense speculation about her private life, particularly since she was known to be an abandoned wife.

Interest in Vestris fuelled the sale of images of the actress. Numerous portraits of her in male roles such as Giovanni, Don Felix and Apollo appeared as prints, penny plain/tuppence coloureds and in journals. Christopher Balme suggests that all theatrical artwork can be analysed with regard to the ‘referential dilemma’, by which the historian should ask: ‘Do such pictures index a “theatrical reality”, an actual performance, or are they the product of iconographical codes, largely divorced from theatrical practice?’<sup>7</sup> In the case of these penny plain prints, most conform to the conventions of the illustrative genre, presenting standardised poses and offer little individualized insight into the performer beyond presenting a likeness to her facial features. Many, including a print of ‘Madame Vestris as Don Giovanni’ published by Hogson (Plate 1), allow the viewer to gaze on her legs, which became what Joseph Roach in discussing celebrity defines as *charismata* or ‘marks of strength’.<sup>8</sup> In such visual representations Vestris’s leg became a sign signifying not just attractiveness but also her supposed propensity for erotic behaviour. This is demonstrated by a particularly risqué toy theatre portrait published by J. Dyer of Vestris in the same role. In it the skirt of Vestris’s tunic is partially open to the waist, revealing a tantalisingly large glimpse of her thigh.<sup>9</sup> Such pictorial depictions of her cross-dressed roles, which were widely available and sold in shops selling toy theatres and juvenile drama, could be enjoyed innocently or might offer a sexual frisson: interpretation of the signs depended on the consumer. They thus mirror the different responses to the theatrical performance shown in the textual commentaries.

In an illuminating article on Vestris’s transvestite roles Kathy Fletcher reveals how her sexuality and gender was central to the appeal of the extravaganzas in which she appeared.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly, in pictorial representations of these stage roles Vestris’s gender is foregrounded even when her legs are not featured. For example, in an engraving of her as Paul from James Cobb’s musical drama *Paul and Virginia*, which was published as the frontispiece of Oxberry’s *Memoir of Madame Vestris* in 1826, the scarf she wears is draped in such a way that it draws attention to her decidedly unmasculine poitrine.<sup>11</sup> Another pointer to her feminine sexual identity is

given in the elegant positioning of the fingers of her small hand as she tips her hat. The presence of signs indicating different gendered identities produces a fluid sensuality. Such images concur with Leigh Hunt's observation on reviewing her portrayal of Macheath: 'In a word, we ever remember an instance of an actress who contrived to be at once so very much of a gentleman, and yet so entire and unaltered a woman.'<sup>12</sup> This ambivalence is also present in the text of the memoir, which, like others volumes making up *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes*, voices a concern with women's moral behaviour.<sup>13</sup> The author mixes fascination for her accomplishment and charms with a censorious recounting of her 'frailties' and conduct. The chief cause of outrage is her avarice, which carries connotations of prostitution:

Madame VESTRIS has done more to degrade her profession, by suffering the impression to go abroad that she could be bought, than the talents of fifty such actresses could remedy. . . . Had the lady, of whom it is our unpleasing task thus to speak, erred from the feelings of nature, had she even emulated Catherine in the number of her lovers, as long as passion had been her only incentive, we should have closed our pages to her errors, and cast a sign, but no reproach, over her frailties.<sup>14</sup>

As well as displaying anxiety over the libidinous woman of dubious appetite, fears about transgression of class boundaries through social climbing are in play.

Suggestions of luxurious living are also present in an early off-stage picture of Vestris (Plate 2) circulating alongside the cross-dressed images. It is based on a painting by the miniature artist Rose Emma Drummond (alleged to be the model for Miss La Creevey in Charles Dickens's novel *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*).<sup>15</sup> Published in the monthly periodical *La Belle Assemblée* in July 1820 in a series of 'biographical sketches of illustrious and distinguished characters', a glamorous Vestris appears in what Clifford John Williams identifies as fashionable Parisienne style.<sup>16</sup> The feminine beauty epitomized by the jewelled tiara nestling in dark curls does not fit well with the text discussing her transvestite roles, but might be expected to appeal to the female readership the fashion magazine courted. As a rare example of an image aimed directly at women, it is at odds with Rachel Cowgill's assertion that 'Vestris is unusual amongst actresses of the nineteenth century in that she exists for us only through the male gaze'.<sup>17</sup> Importantly, her legs, the signifier of

her sexually titillating identity, are absent. Instead, the signs all point to the refinement of the social elite.

Partly because of the provocative roles she played and also because she was associated with a dissolute Regency set, Vestris became the focus of much sardonic attention. Satirical print culture was at its height in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and, as Jim Davis notes, ‘Caricature helped both to establish and to undermine the actor’s public image or persona’.<sup>18</sup> This is evident in images of the actress that cropped up in publications such as *Figaro in London* and caricature magazines such as *The Looking Glass*. In an 1827 print ‘The Select Vestry Men’ (Plate 3) she is depicted outside the Theatre Royal Covent Garden in costume as Macheath from John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* and surrounded by admirers. It is not necessary to read the speech bubbles in which the men assert their sexual rights over the actress they have bankrolled to understand the implication that Vestris is prostituting herself. The eye is immediately drawn to her fulsome thighs by their central positioning within the composition. Even more suggestively, the shading on the light-coloured fabric hints at the mons pubis and pubic hair. The etching was published as a single sheet by S.W Fores, who ran a gallery-style print room in Piccadilly catering for fashionable, high-end customers.<sup>19</sup> Although the initial numbers of purchasers of the print is likely to have been relatively small, the image would have been viewed by others through its appearance in the printshop window and lounge and by being circulated in albums of satirical prints that were hired out or privately circulated among men.<sup>20</sup>

The print forms an interesting counterpoint with George Cruickshank’s illustration of Vestris in Pierce Egan’s popular serial *Life in London* (1821).<sup>21</sup> Entitled ‘The Green Room at Drury Lane Theatre: Tom and Jerry Introduced to the Characters in Don Giovanni’, the picture shows Vestris clad as Giovanni and once again encircled by men. Jacky Bratton notes that the portrait lacks the ‘edge’ of sexual anxiety the story evokes since Vestris’s costume ‘terminates at mid thigh to reveal shapely legs in white tights – not the whole lower body as displayed by the men’.<sup>22</sup> Egan’s text was not targeted at a single-gendered readership. The stark disparity in emphasis in the two images can therefore be attributed to the differing intended consumers of the images.

Both examples illustrate how Vestris’s celebrity status was exploited to make money for third parties. Among those who capitalized on her popularity were the

publishers of sheet music for songs performed by Vestris such as ‘Buy a Broom’, and ceramics factories in Derby and Worcester that fashioned porcelain figurines of her in some of her famous roles. Most notoriously Mr Papera, an Italian modeller who created and sold plaster of Paris moulds of Vestris’s famous limbs, came to public attention in January 1831 when he alleged their theft by one of his journeymen to a police court. The incident duly became the subject of a satirical etching by William Heath that was published by S. Gans.<sup>23</sup> Entitled ‘A Connoisseur’, it portrays a man admiring the copies with a speech bubble revealing his wish that ‘some kind friend would **divide them** with me’. The pun is replicated in a verse from a contemporary broadside, ‘Madam Vestris’s Legs’ recounting Papera’s conversation with the magistrate:

Then sir, says the laughing Magistrate,  
I now must ask you, whether  
The legs of Madam Vestris,  
Could not be kept together.  
I swear the handsome legs were mine,  
And hope you’ll give the thief a dose,  
For it was not in my power,  
To keep the legs together close.<sup>24</sup>

The crude implication is that Vestris herself chooses not to keep her legs closed, thereby offering herself for male penetration.

Such images and texts featuring Vestris reflect the discourse of the patriarchal society and testify to the dominant mode of viewing women from the perspective of its favoured sex. The male gaze, as originally theorised by Laura Mulvey in relation to portrayals of women in Hollywood film, ‘projects its fantasy onto the female figure’.<sup>25</sup> In Mulvey’s psychoanalytic analysis, along with experiencing the pleasure of looking, the male spectator subconsciously registers unease due to his fear of castration: ‘Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified.’<sup>26</sup> This co-existing fascination and anxiety is evident in the portrayals of Vestris.

In its report of the court proceedings *The Times* reports that Papera claimed the actress had “‘stood” to have a cast taken of her leg’.<sup>27</sup> If this was true she was

colluding in the marketing of her body. This was not a new phenomenon. Arguably any female performer who posed for a 'high art' portrait could be said to do that, even when portrayed in idealized or symbolic representations of the tragic or comic muses. Moreover, numerous actresses had been commodified in chinaware and other decorative objects.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that Vestris was effectively sanctioning the fetishising of her body parts would appear to legitimate the sexualising of her image and to collude with the subjugation imposed by the male gaze.

In contrast to this willing (or expedient) submission, in 1831 (the same year as the Papera case) Vestris entered a new phase of her career, taking on the management of the Olympic Theatre. By this time she must have been acutely aware of the power of images in shaping her public identity and thus it is probable that she considered this in planning her productions to attract paying customers. Applying the theories of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, I have previously argued that the theatre of the 1830s can be viewed as a field (*champ*) of cultural production in which Vestris sought to create a unique position by creating an exclusive identity for her new establishment.<sup>29</sup> She instituted a number of reforms that suggest she was targeting the higher end of society. For example, her refurbishment of the Olympic's auditorium served to make the environment and ambiance more appealing to a refined audience. In line with this, her ticket pricing policy with one shilling for a seat in the gallery effectively excluded the lowest end of the market.<sup>30</sup> She also decided to end performances early, thereby enabling middle-class spectators to return to the suburbs by midnight.<sup>31</sup> Taken together these measures encouraged the presence of audience members drawn from the higher end of the social spectrum with associated levels of income and education. Its members are therefore likely to share certain dispositions or taste preferences, or in Bourdieu's terms *habitus*. Vestris's choice of subject matter in putting on classically themed burlettas during her opening productions and as her Christmas entertainments for the next five years correspond to this habitus and draw on the cachet of high culture.<sup>32</sup> That is not to suggest that Vestris had a deliberate marketing policy of targeting her productions to meet an acknowledged demand: Bourdieu argues against such a 'reductionist vision'.<sup>33</sup> Instead, Vestris's doxic understanding of culture corresponded with the dispositions of a large section of the audience.<sup>34</sup> Maria Shevtsova's emphasis on the fact that fields of production 'function in *cultural* contexts' points to the value of analysing the Olympic's repertoire in terms of the sociocultural meanings they generated in the specific era.<sup>35</sup> In this light, Vestris's



choice of extravaganza (an alternative description for burletta) is significant for, as Fletcher argues, one of its features was that it ‘could utilize physical display in a way which tended to reduce the female to a collection of body parts and bordered on the pornographic.’<sup>36</sup> It is likely that Vestris chose as the signature pieces of her new theatrical endeavour productions that would require her to wear revealing costumes, correctly anticipating that images of these would circulate and provide publicity.

### **Vestris as Venus: Goddess and Flirt**

To compliment Moody and Fletcher’s explorations of how Vestris’s sexual identity was tied to the parts she played, I will focus on the significance of one particular burletta role.<sup>37</sup> In James Robinson Planché’s 1832 *The Paphian Bower, or Venus and Adonis* Vestris played Venus, the Roman goddess of love and sex, clearly a suggestive choice with a subtext surely registered by part of the potential male audience. In her book on the Galatea myth Gail Marshall suggests the adoption of classical drapery ‘seems to have enabled the actress to signal to her audiences a “chaste permission to desire”’.<sup>38</sup> The diaphanous outfit depicted in a lithograph of Vestris’s Venus printed and published by G.E. Madely (Plate 4), combined with the actress’s positioning with one hand elevated and the other lifting the hem of her skirt to reveal her calves and ankles, encourages the lascivious, rather than chaste, appetite. Applying Tracy Davis’s comments on erotic material in monthlies from later in the century to this image explains the pose’s suggestivity:

Because the sexualized context relies on references to more overtly pornographic literature . . . and a long pictorial tradition of inferred sexuality in the subject, the knowing reader of these illustrated weeklies sees more than appears to be represented. Thus, any candid or posed photograph that gives an excuse for a posterior view or lifted skirt alludes to rape or invites sodomy;<sup>39</sup>

Evidence of the hidden sexual coding also comes from the production of *The Paphian Bower* itself. Immediately after Vestris’s final speech, in which she addresses the audience in a conflated persona as both Venus and herself as owner of the Olympic, the stage directions read: ‘*Music—The BOAR is brought in, in procession, by CUPID, &c., forming the picture by Westall—*’<sup>40</sup> The realized painting

is Richard Westall's 'The Boar That Killed Adonis', painted in 1799 and widely distributed in engraved form. In this, as in all his images of Venus, the goddess is naked. On stage, Vestris is clothed, but not, we can deduce, in the audience's imagination.

The sexual message behind the Venus association is further confirmed in 1842 by the cover of the first edition of the semi-pornographic weekly serial *The Exquisite*, which features a version of *The Paphian Bower* portrait. The image of the actress is framed with a decorative border that includes the banner of the magazine and a dancing girl with a suggestive leg pose. In the lower foreground two men observe Vestris's performance: one, a military gentleman with a plumed helmet, lounges in a chair and holds a drinking glass; the other, presented from the back view, stands and examines her through a magnifying glass. The men, like the publication's readers, are voyeurs, looking at Vestris whose bodily position calls to mind the *pudica* pose in which a female nude is depicted covering her genitals with one hand. Nanette Salomon traces the historical meaning of the gesture in Hellenistic art and its subsequent ideological interpretation. She argues publically viewing paintings and statuary of female *pudica* nudes functions as a bonding experience for heterosexual males: 'The representation of "pudicated" women therewith allowed for the diversification of the western male population into power hierarchies by providing them all with a common "natural" and "essentially manly" site of mastery.'<sup>41</sup> The cover of this serial encapsulates and is itself a facilitator of such homosocial situations. Moreover, the presence of the drinking male means the illustration does not represent a performance at the Olympic Theatre as the audience could not imbibe in the auditorium. Thus the composite image hints at the possibility of a 'private audience' with the actress.

Vestris's status as the object of the male gaze is reinforced by the accompanying text which lists 'her "favoured" lovers, amongst whom, however, the chief have been T. Duncombe, John Phillipson, Lord Castlereagh, and Charles Matthews [sic], her present husband.' (Some of these appear in Plate 3.) It also praises her body: 'Perhaps the symmetry of her form has never been equalled by any of her professional contemporaries ; and as a sample of feminine beauty, in reference to classical proportion, the model of her leg and foot—still occupies a conspicuous site in the studios of the sculptor and the artist.'<sup>42</sup> The reference to her popularity as an artist's model, in the context of a publication whose subtitle advertised its 'Amorous

adventures, piquant jests, and spicey sayings', is itself suggestive. In some of the many published memoirs that purportedly were about Vestris but contained some unsubstantiated or blatantly untrue stories, an assertion is made that she was painted by the pseudonymous 'Kang-Kook' who made his fortune in India and then entered Parliament. According to the *Memoirs of the Life, Public and Private Adventures of Madame Vestris* published in 1836:

Madame Vestris could not escape his notice, and he has her painted in various attitudes as Venus, all of them in a state of nudity; these pictures have silk curtains before them, and are like the veil of the jewish sanctum sanctorum, only withdrawn for the gratification of the elect. Whether the lady *sat* or *laid* for these designs, is left for the reader to find out <sup>43</sup>

The writer says he has not himself seen the canvas but its existence is well known. Whether or not there is any foundation for this scurrilous claim is irrelevant for it still coloured perceptions of Vestris. Furthermore, it is surely significant that she is said to pose as Venus.

In their edited volume *The Manifestations of Venus*, Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott argue the representation of Venus as a subject in art is perforce linked with classical statuary of the near-naked goddess.<sup>44</sup> In the early nineteenth century this is especially true after the discovery of the *Venus de Milo* on the Aegean island of Melos in 1820 and its subsequent display at the Louvre in Paris. At this time a key source for information on Greek mythology was Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, which had first been published in 1788. In the entry on Venus Lemprière differentiates between three surnames given to the goddess by the ancients: 'The first of these she received as presiding over wantonness and incestuous enjoyments; the second because she patronized pure love, and chaste and moderate gratifications; and the third because she favoured the propensities of the vulgar, and was fond of sensual pleasures.'<sup>45</sup> Thus the figure of Venus had dichotomous associations and could represent both purity and sexual abandon. As Vestris performed as the goddess on stage chaste members of the audience could interpret her as a figure of romantic love at the same time that others viewed her as an eroticized embodiment of lust. Jane Moody confirms this duality, arguing Vestris's mythological pieces 'offered

audiences the illusion of respectability' while 'enabl[ing] Vestris to market herself, and by extension the Olympic Theatre, as a realm of luscious sexuality and female power'.<sup>46</sup>

Questions of the balance between Vestris's overt sexuality and her authority surface again in a satirical depiction of her relationship with Charles Mathews, an actor in her Olympic company whom she married in July 1838 just before setting off on a US tour. Gossip circulated that the marriage was cynically contracted to make Vestris respectable in the eyes of the American audience. 'MADAME V-, AND HER YOUNG TIGER' (Plate 5) lampoons the union. The disproportionate size and position of the figures, with the emphasis on Vestris's buttocks and exposed décolletage, does not suggest a loving marriage but rather that the toy boy is riding his partner for financial and sexual gain. Given that the image was published in yet another scandalmongering memoir her oversized bonnet is not required to conceal her identity but may hint that her thoughts are too crude to depict. Because Vestris holds a document and is depicted as the figure of greater stature Tracy Davis deciphers the image as 'a skilful negotiation with what was . . . a new allocation of power: the "womaner"'.<sup>47</sup> To my mind, the over-riding impression, however, is derogatory of Vestris, the old mare.

In the battle to control her public image it seems no coincidence that at around the same time two more favourable portraits of the offstage actress were put into commercial circulation. The first of these is a more conventional portrait of Vestris as a fashionable private woman. The artist, Alfred Chalon, was an academician and a figure of respectability having become Portrait Painter in Water Colour to Her Majesty in 1837. Chalon's painting, reproduced in an etching by H. Robinson and published in 1838, portrays Vestris as a sumptuously costumed beauty, accompanied by her pet dogs with a dangling piece of greenery suggestive of the natural world. The portrait is three-quarter length so her legs are omitted.

Also dating from the same time is the charming domestic scene by W. Clerk entitled 'Mr and Mrs Charles Mathews (Late Madame Vestris) at Home!!!.' (Plate 6). In the eighteenth century, as Kristina Straub argues, there were constant attempts 'to domesticate actresses's sexuality'.<sup>48</sup> This emphasis on domesticity became more marked in nineteenth-century society with the pervasive Victorian ideology of the 'angel in the house' whose proper sphere of action was in the private home. Depictions of the actress away from the stage, such as Plate 6, play into this narrative

and suggest her more ‘authentic’ self as a conventional married woman. Intriguingly, the meaning is undercut by the fact that as Vestris holds the lead of her spaniel, she once again reveals her leg. The observer while recognising the different contextual frame, still registers the previously established sign with its sexual connotations. In decoding this image we should also pay attention to the text of the caption. The wording punningly alludes to the ‘At Home’ one-man performances of Charles Mathews’ father in which the great monopolylinguist entertained audiences from 1817 until his death in 1835.<sup>49</sup> In addition, it highlights the change in Vestris’s nomenclature through the use of parenthesis. This might be understood as an attempt to terminate the connection with her feckless first husband and the scandal associated with her behaviour after he left, but this interpretation is complicated by the presence of the multiple exclamation marks. Should these be seen as typical hyperbolic typography as seen on contemporary playbills or might they imply a sarcastic tone?

Later depictions of Vestris show the actress in character for various productions, but usually in scenes from the plays and the illustrations generally appear alongside reviews in the theatrical press. Such images have a different function as publicity for the productions and theatres, and are less concerned with creating or maintaining the performer’s identity. As an older married actress, Vestris appears to have lost her commercial celebrity appeal. Despite the fact that her more mature acting won her plaudits and that in retrospect her pioneering Shakespearian productions are the subject of study,<sup>50</sup> obituaries published after her death in 1856 dwell almost exclusively on her body and the earlier performances.

### **Sara Lane as Performer**

In comparison with that of Vestris the iconology of Sara Lane (née Borrow, 1822-1899) is more limited. Her professional life began in 1841, some 26 years after Vestris, so it is important not to underestimate the differences between the eras in which they were active. Their social status was also markedly different, Lane’s family background and early career being less exalted. She was born into a working-class family that had not previously been involved in the entertainment business. Her first professional engagements were as a singer performing at minor venues in Camden Town and Knightsbridge, thus she largely escaped attention from the theatrical press. In 1843 she was engaged at the Britannia Saloon in unfashionable Hoxton. Her association with this East End playhouse was to last 56 years until her death at the

turn of the century. Initially billed as Miss Wilton, she quickly gained popularity for her performances particularly in comic and soubrette parts, multi-roles, burlesques, and pantomimes. Her status as the company's leading lady was confirmed by her marriage to the Britannia's owner manager Samuel Lane.

The earliest public portrait of Lane appeared in the *Theatrical Times* in August 1848 and shows the young actress as the eponymous Irish peasant in George Dibdin Pitt's melodrama *Kathleen, The Pride of Munster*.<sup>51</sup> From this we can deduce she had dark hair and a tiny waist, a feature that reappears in photographs decades later. Apart from this, the portrait offers no markers of individuality. The next significant image appeared in 1858, the year in which Samuel Lane built a much improved and enlarged theatre. On the opening night of the new Britannia Theatre, Lane appeared as Jacqueline Jaconetti, a wandering Savoyard in Colin Hazlewood's melodrama *The Brigand's Secret*. A penny plain/tuppence coloured likeness was produced by local printer John Redington (Plate 7) as one of a pair with George Clair as Matthioli from the same production. This type of artwork functions as a theatrical souvenir, being in George Speiaght's words, 'essentially a popular art for a popular audience'.<sup>52</sup> Comparing it with Plate 3, it is noticeable that although Lane's calves are in view the pattern on her lower legs highlights the presence of thick stockings, and thus the image lacks the suggestiveness of Vestris's portrait. This fits with reviews that describe Lane's natural on-stage charm. The *Theatrical Times*, for example, refers to the "naivete" and ease in her acting'.<sup>53</sup>

Apart from an image of Lane on a 1856 playbill in one of her multi-role performances (George Dibin Pitt's *The Flirt*) and another illustrating a scene from the 1863 pantomime *Hickory Dickory Dock* in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* there are virtually no representations of Lane as an actress during the 1850s and '60s.<sup>54</sup> This might be attributed to the Britannia Theatre's marginal status as an East End establishment with a predominately working-class audience and to the fact that Lane did not play tragic parts. She also did not feature on music covers as many theatre and music-hall stars did, possibly because she only performed in one place so her songs were not known beyond the one venue.

From the 1860s the most popular forms of theatrical portraiture were the photographic *carte-de-visite* and cabinet cards.<sup>55</sup> Lane appears in a few of these.<sup>56</sup> Had she been a touring actress it is likely that there would have been more as photographs became a vital means of generating publicity for performers at each

venue and for securing new employment contracts when sent to agents.<sup>57</sup> The most widely disseminated photograph of Lane is probably the one that was given away with the *Saturday Programme* of 29 April 1876 (Plate 8). With its plain background and the sitter's demure plaited hairstyle, the decorous image looks like a family portrait with nothing to suggest Lane's professional life. It is typical of what has been described as the 'democratization of the photograph' whereby since all classes can be photographed there is a blurring of the distinction between celebrities and 'ordinary' people.<sup>58</sup> David Mayer distinguishes between 'the image which depicts the actress undertaking and physically engaged in the role, and the portrait: a pictorial likeness of the passive, almost expressionless actress with no visible agenda apart from presenting an image of an attractive, well-gowned woman'.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, photographs of the second type are significant because the women had more agency in presenting the image: in the photographer's studio they could determine the costume, pose and expression offered to the camera. In this instance, Lane presents herself as an amiable woman of means. The fact that examples of the first of Mayer's categories are missing from photographic portraits of Lane marks a difference between her and her West End counterparts. It suggests there was little or no market for pictures of the Britannia's productions, almost certainly due to the relatively limited income of the theatre's audience.

Although there are no photographs of Lane in role there are drawings of some of her characters in the annual pantomime. These primarily appear in the programmes of the Britannia pantomime from the mid 1880s (previously they had not been illustrated). The first to feature Lane in role was sold during the run of *King Trickee; or, Harlequin The Demon Beetle, The Sporting Duchess and the Golden Casket*, which opened on Boxing Day 1887. The souvenir programme is clearly aimed at a broad family market as evidenced by the fact that the advertisements are for a local hat warehouse, a story by George Sims serialized in the *Weekly Dispatch*, a Hoxton maker and purveyor of jam, and free gifts given away with purchases of the comic magazine *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday*. Sold for two pennies, the book contains the argument of the pantomime, a cast list, scene descriptions, a short history of the theatre, and simple illustrations of each of the main characters. Lane appears as Lady St. Leger, the Duchess of Allscarlet (Plate 9). As befits her sporting character, there is little indication that the actress portraying the jaunty, narrow-waisted figure holding

a riding crop is in her mid-sixties. In Balme's terms, the image seems to index the theatrical reality of performance. It offers no insight into Lane's own identity.

### **Lane as Manager**

A more fruitful avenue for examining Lane's iconology is to look at images that comment on her management skills. In her chapter 'The actress as manager' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* Jo Robinson identifies similarities in the way Vestris, Marie Bancroft, and Sarah Bernhardt were depicted satirically as 'monstrous women, towering over their midget husbands'. With reference to depictions such as Plate 5, she asserts 'What these images – with their topsy-turvy rendering of gender and power – suggest is a real anxiety about the power of women usurping the traditional male power in theatrical business structures, a monstrous femininity which the step into management from out of the frame of the proscenium arch momentarily and disturbingly revealed to contemporary audiences.'<sup>60</sup> While Robinson is right in relation to the actress-managers she mentions, the iconology of Sara Lane does not fit this description.

Take Lane's appearance on the cover of the 31 May 1890 edition of the *Man of the World* (Plate 10), a periodical from the same publishing stable as the *Sporting Times*. The only other woman to have been so featured in the previous five months was a member of royalty, Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck. Male subjects included the explorer Henry Stanley, Charles Steward Parnell MP, artist Sir Frederick Leighton, admiral of the fleet Sir Henry Keppel, and the Marquis of Breadalbane. Although a few members of the entertainment industry were featured, such as James A. Bailey (the business partner of impresario Phineas Barnum) and the actor E.S. Willard (a member of Wilson Barrett's company and noted for his Shakespearean roles), Lane is an unlikely choice among these celebrities.

Instead of portraying her as disproportionately large, the artist emphasizes Lane's short stature by including a large area of blank space above her. With her umbrella, sober grey ensemble and direct gaze the subject looks businesslike. The accompanying text shows that the readership is not expected to have visited the *Britannia* and introduces the manageress as its 'presiding genius'.<sup>61</sup> (Since the death of her husband in 1871 she had managed the *Britannia* in her own right.) The image is typical of Lane's treatment as an honorary man. For example, in the same year her opinions about unionisation are reported in the *Stage* in a column entitled 'Views of



Representative Men'.<sup>62</sup> Even though the Britannia Theatre was perceived as outside of the established first rank of venues, its owner-manager was recognized as an important figure, but on male terms.

Proof of her status in the capital's theatrical world comes from the fact that she is caricatured in the press. These caricatures lack the satirical bite of those of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, often appearing in journals that are primarily about or for the theatrical profession and therefore lack objective distance. In the *Entr'acte* of 1 October 1887 cartoonist Alfred Bryan depicts Lane wearing a fancy hat and once again holding an umbrella, but this time topped with a trident (Plate 11). The trident, a symbol traditionally associated with the figure of Britannia, functions as a sign of status, linking the name of the theatre with the nation and the monarch. Lane's pose reinforces this as the umbrella is held in the position of a royal sceptre. Ironically, although it was Vestris who performed before Queen Victoria and who was painted several times by the monarch in her private notebooks, it was Lane whose image was associated with royalty, at least among her East End audience. Her obituary in the *Era* notes that she has often been termed 'Britannia's own queen'.<sup>63</sup>

Another cartoon that plays on this association appeared in *Judy* in 1892.<sup>64</sup> Captioned 'The Other Lady who Can "Rule Britannia"', Lane stands in front of notices that proclaim her theatre is full. She poses with hands on waist, gazing directly at the onlooker as if to say "Look at me and my success". She sports a top hat, a millinery item more usually associated with men although at this time sometimes worn by women as part of a riding habit. Lane's headgear indicates practicality and activity and once again positions her as an honorary man.<sup>65</sup>

References to capability and authority are also emphasized in the cartoons of her management that appeared in periodicals with specialist theatrical interests such as the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*. These are typically composite images illustrating various aspects of her activity at the theatre. For example, in Alfred Bryan's cartoons in the Days with Celebrities series published in the periodical *Moonshine* (Plate 12), Lane is depicted as 'The Real Good Fairy of Pantomime'.<sup>66</sup> She is shown both on stage, where the captions tell us 'She sings as well and is as charming as ever', and off stage, in one segment arriving at the theatre to the excitement of local residents and in another reading aboard a cross-Channel boat. Her dresser exclaims at the number of costumes 'Missus' is going to wear this year and the packaging reveals these have arrived from Paris, attesting to the fashionable

opulence of the theatre's productions. Here what Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959) would term Lane's 'backstage' and 'frontstage' are not in conflict, both contributing to her celebrity identity.<sup>67</sup> In the reference to her vacations in France we see that, like Vestris, Lane enjoyed the privileges of wealth, yet it was framed differently. Vestris's affluence was frequently viewed with suspicion or innuendo as the early association with being funded by lovers still persisted. When her husband appeared in court in bankruptcy proceedings in 1844, Mathews caused laughter by jokingly referring to his wife's well-known extravagance.<sup>68</sup> Conversely, Lane was not castigated for her financial success because of her well-known philanthropy. Indeed her wealth was more a source of pride, regarded as honestly earned in the service of the East End. Hence in the top left corner of the cartoon is the legend: 'The old ladies about Hoxton are never tired of talking about the good deeds of Mrs Lane'. Finally she appears in the guise of Britannia ruling her empire, which the motto on her shield declares is 'Open every evening'. Apart from this allegorical depiction it is noticeable that in none of the segments of the cartoon is Lane portrayed in her managerial role.

In many respects Sara Lane appears to escape the confinement of sexist expectation in a way that Vestris never could. Her portrayal in caricatures is admiring, with no implication that female management is undesirable, inappropriate or risky. I have found no visual images that seek to undermine her personal or professional integrity. Yet I nevertheless contend that Lane's treatment can be read as a different manifestation of the sexism that Robinson identifies in her arguments about gender fear and power dynamics. Rather than attacking her as monstrous *à la* Vestris, male artists neutralized the threat of the female manager by making Lane into a benevolent granny figure (admittedly helped by her physical appearance). Ironically this is the culmination and the price of Sam Lane's campaign in the 1840s and '50s to make his establishment respectable, denying any association with crime and prostitution.<sup>69</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In accounting for the differing treatments of the two women it is clear Lane had several advantages over Vestris. Firstly and somewhat perversely, geography and class, in that the Britannia was 'only' an East End theatre, occupying a less prestigious position in the field of cultural production. Unlike Vestris, Lane did not have the temerity to take over a high-class cultural institution such as Covent Garden.

When Vestris did so in 1839, the celebrated actor William Macready tartly wrote in his diary: ‘It is not a fitting spectacle—the national drama in the hands of Mrs. Vestris and Mr. Charles Mathews!’<sup>70</sup> Secondly, the social context was more favourable for Lane. Vestris’s career in the early nineteenth century coincided with a time of crisis over the condition of the theatre and women were caught in the crossfire. As Kate Newey points out in relation to women’s theatrical writing:

In the emerging *laissez-faire* economic culture of the early nineteenth century . . . commercial pressures moved theatre into areas and genres in which it was problematic for women to venture, given the simultaneous emphasis on models of female behaviour and ideologies of femininity which increasingly required women to disengage from matters commercial or corporeal.<sup>71</sup>

Hence Vestris bore the full brunt of disapproval of women’s engagement in theatrical and managerial activity. In contrast, Lane’s early management experience was publicly shielded by the fact that her husband was technically in charge. After Samuel Lane’s death there does not appear to be any surprise or dissent at his widow’s assumption of the de facto control of the theatre. Moreover, by the 1880s and ’90s when she had more than proved her capabilities as an actor-manager the rise of the New Woman saw females challenging expectations in many areas. The theatre itself was arguably more respectable, epitomized by Henry Irving’s knighthood in 1895. Peter Thomson shrewdly observes that in conferring this honour Queen Victoria was ‘confirming the respectability of success’.<sup>72</sup> This was certainly the case for Lane, who died in 1899 leaving a not inconsiderable fortune of £126,000.

Lane’s third advantage was that she was always more homely looking than Vestris whose bodily symmetry and bewitching legs attracted so many admirers. Then, as now, the shelf life of beauty is limited. In the book accompanying an exhibition about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century actresses Shearer West notes the rarity of portraits of older actresses and characterizes the typical treatment as ‘easy misogyny’.<sup>73</sup> Certainly in a number of reviews Vestris was treated cruelly for ageing.<sup>74</sup> In a pre-Botox era she was ridiculed for her overuse of white powder. Even her *charismata* became her *stigmata* as her famous legs, the stable signifier of sex, were seen as incompatible with her mature years. Lane, on the other hand, had played

old women in a number of her early roles, was never typecast by beauty, and in her seventies was still donning pantomime breeches without censure. She therefore lacked the fascinating but dangerous ‘*to-be-looked-at-ness*’ that Mulvey identifies with the female fantasy figure.<sup>75</sup>

The iconology of these two figures reflects developments in artistic mediums as well as changing social attitudes. When the images are read alongside the texts circulating contemporaneously we see the same pattern of reflecting or challenging hegemonic gendered assumptions about women’s roles and behaviour within the theatrical professions and society in general. They are clearly generated out of the ‘social formation’ to use Bryson’s terminology.<sup>76</sup> The majority of the pictorial depictions of Vestris are framed by the male gaze. This might largely be seen as being beyond the control of the subject, but individual behaviour was also a significant factor in shaping the public identities disseminated in visual form. So although both women are celebrity figures (the extensive national coverage of Lane’s death and funeral confirm this), the repercussions of Vestris’s more overt sexual appetite dogged her whole life whereas Lane was able to keep any transgressions in her off-stage life private. Vestris’s public image was always tied to her sexual allure, even if only by negative association as she grew older. Of the two, only Vestris was devalued by the taint of commercial commodification. Ironically it was the very pervasiveness and longevity of the visual imagery that had helped establish her as a celebrity that contributed to this debasement. In contrast, Lane was appreciated more for her sympathetic personality and professional accomplishments. Contemporary writing about her never challenges the appropriateness of a woman as manager and her business abilities are taken for granted. As a biography published in the *Stage* in 1882 makes plain, her success is equally attributable to her ‘womanly virtues’ as to her ‘business-like faculties’ and ‘artistic capabilities’.<sup>77</sup> Yet the very fact that her virtues are ascribed to her gender betrays the persistence of the hegemonic male perspective. Overall, despite the considerable achievements of both women as successful actor-managers, it is clear that neither was able to escape the prevailing discourse of gender difference.

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- <sup>1</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Women, Art, and Power', in Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, Keith Moxey, eds., *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 13.
- <sup>2</sup> Norman Bryson, 'Semiology and Visual Interpretation', in Norman Bryson *et al*, *Visual Theory*, p. 65, 70.
- <sup>3</sup> Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 17-8.
- <sup>4</sup> Kimberly Crouch, 'The public life of actresses: prostitutes or ladies?' in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (London & New York: Longman, 1997), p. 59 and Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Entertaining Women: the actress in eighteenth-century theatre and culture' in Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre 1730-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 162-3.
- <sup>5</sup> 'Giovanni in London', *Theatrical Inquistitor*, July 1860, p. 394.
- <sup>6</sup> *The London Theatre 1811-1866: Selections from the diary of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. Eluned Brown (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1966) p.99.
- <sup>7</sup> Christopher B. Balme, 'Interpreting the Pictorial Record: Theatre Iconography and the Referential Dilemma', *Theatre Research International* 22:3 (Autumn 1997), p. 190-1.
- <sup>8</sup> Joseph Roach, 'The Prior History of "It"', in Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds., *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 24.
- <sup>9</sup> The image is discussed and reproduced in Jane Moody, 'Illusions of authorship' in Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin, eds., *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 112-3.
- <sup>10</sup> Kathy Fletcher, 'Planché, Vestris, and the Transvestite Role: Sexuality and Gender in Victorian Popular Theatre', *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 15 (1987), p. 9-33.
- <sup>11</sup> The portrait is by Wageman and engraved by Woolnoth.
- <sup>12</sup> 'Theatrical Examiner', *Examiner*, 30 July 1820, p. 492.
- <sup>13</sup> Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 181-2.
- <sup>14</sup> Catherine Oxberry, ed., 'Memoir of Madame Vestris', *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes* vol.5 (London: George Virtue, John Duncombe, 1826), p. 101.
- <sup>15</sup> David Simkin, 'Rose Emma Drummond', <http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/BTNPointerMyra.htm>, accessed 12 February 2016.
- <sup>16</sup> Clifford John Williams, *Madame Vestris: A Theatrical Biography* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1973), p. 41.
- <sup>17</sup> Rachel Cowgill, 'Re-gendering the Libertine; or, the Taming of the Rake: Lucy Vestris as Don Giovanni on the early nineteenth-century London stage', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 10:1 (March 1998), p. 65.
- <sup>18</sup> Jim Davis, 'Spectatorship' in Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre 1730-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 63.

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- <sup>19</sup> Amelia Faye Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked: Irony, Authenticity, and Individualism in Eighteenth-Century English Prints* (Delaware, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2008), p. 97.
- <sup>20</sup> Cindy McCreery, *Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 25-7.
- <sup>21</sup> The illustration appeared in Pierce Egan, *Life in London* (London: Sherwood, Neeley, and Jones, 1821), p. 324.
- <sup>22</sup> Jacky Bratton, 'Mirroring men: the actress in drag' in Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 238.
- <sup>23</sup> The Victoria and Albert Museum, London holds a copy in the H. Beard Print Collection.
- <sup>24</sup> 'Madam Vestris's Legs' ballad sheet (London: T. Birt, c.1831.), Gabrielle Enthoven Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
- <sup>25</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16:3 (1975), p. 11.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.
- <sup>27</sup> 'Police', *The Times*, 21 January 1831, p. 4.
- <sup>28</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, 'Actresses and the economics of celebrity, 1700-1800' in Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds., *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 159.
- <sup>29</sup> Janice Norwood, 'Alternative Pantomimes? Classical Burletta at the Olympic Theatre, 1831-1835' paper given at The 'Sister Arts' in the Popular Theatre, c.1820-1910 conference at University of Birmingham, July 2010.
- <sup>30</sup> George Taylor, *Players and Performance in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 15.
- <sup>31</sup> Alan Fischler, 'Purloined Posterity: The Reforms and Reputation of Madame Vestris', *Women's Studies* 24 (1995), p. 309.
- <sup>32</sup> The Olympic burlettas featured plots based on the mythological stories of Prometheus and Pandora, Orpheus and Eurydice, Venus and Adonis, Perseus and Andromeda, Telemachus and Calypso, and Cupid and Psyche. They played in direct competition with the established annual pantomimes produced at the patent theatres.
- <sup>33</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production', in *The Polity Reader in Cultural Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), p. 55.
- <sup>34</sup> This is not to imply that lower class audiences had no knowledge of the classics. Edith Hall claims the proliferation of classical burlesques in the mid-Victorian popular theatre shows classical mythology was not solely the preserve of the higher classes, 'Classical Mythology in the Victorian Popular Theatre', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 5:3 (Winter 1999) p. 336-66.
- <sup>35</sup> Maria Shevtsova, *Sociology of Theatre and Performance* (Verona: QuiEdit, 2009) p. 98.
- <sup>36</sup> Kathy Fletcher, 'Planché, Vestris, and the Transvestite Role: Sexuality and Gender in Victorian Popular Theatre', *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 15 (1987), p. 15-6.

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- <sup>37</sup> See Jane Moody, 'Illusions of authorship' and *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 197-205; and Kathy Fletcher, *op cit*.
- <sup>38</sup> Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage: Feminine Performance and the Galatea Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 56.
- <sup>39</sup> Tracy C. Davis, 'The Actress in Victorian Pornography', *Theatre Journal* 41:3 (October 1989), p. 305.
- <sup>40</sup> J. R. Planché, *The Paphian Bower; or Venus and Adonis* in T.F. Dillon Croker and S. Tucker, eds., *The Extravaganzas of J. R. Planché, Esq., (Somerset Herald) 1825-1871* (London: Samuel French 1879), Vol.1, p. 112. See Felicity Nussbaum, 'Actresses and the economics of celebrity, 1700-1800' in Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds., *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 151 on how actresses used such speeches to increase their popularity.
- <sup>41</sup> Nanette Salomon, 'The Venus Pudica: uncovering art history's "hidden agendas" and pernicious pedigrees' in Griselda Pollock, ed., *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 83.
- <sup>42</sup> *The Exquisite*, Vol. 1 (1842) p. 2.
- <sup>43</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of the Life, Public and Private Adventures of Madame Vestris* (London: John Duncombe [1836]), p. 164-5.
- <sup>44</sup> Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott, 'Introduction' in Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott, eds., *The Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 3.
- <sup>45</sup> J. Lemprière, *Classical Dictionary: containing a copious account of all the proper names mentioned in ancient authors*, 3rd American edition (Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1822), p. 606.
- <sup>46</sup> Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, p. 203.
- <sup>47</sup> Tracy C. Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage, 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 278.
- <sup>48</sup> Kristina Struab, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) p. 94.
- <sup>49</sup> See Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, pp. 191-7.
- <sup>50</sup> For example, Trevor Griffiths, 'A Neglected Pioneer Production: Madame Vestris' *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Covent Garden, 1840', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 30:3 (Summer 1979) p. 386-96, Elizabeth Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* (London: The Women's Press, 1998) and Janice Norwood, *Lives of Shakespearian Actors: Part IV: Lucia Elizabeth Vestris* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011).
- <sup>51</sup> There is some confusion over the title of the play. The caption to the illustration reads 'Mrs. Lane as Kathleen in "The Soldier's Bride."' while the associated review refers to *Kathleen, the Pride of Munster*. In the Memorandum of Agreement between Pitt and the theatre the play is named as *Kathleen, the Maid of Munster*; Britannia Theatre Assignments Book, author's collection.
- <sup>52</sup> George Speaight, *Collecting Theatre Memorabilia* (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1988), p. 34.

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- <sup>53</sup> *Theatrical Times*, 5 August 1848, p. 350.
- <sup>54</sup> Britannia playbill for 8 December 1856, MIC.C.13137 Playbills 376, British Library and *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 9 January 1864.
- <sup>55</sup> John Plunkett, 'Celebrity and Community: The Poetics of the *Carte-de-visite*', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8.1 (Spring 2003), p. 55.
- <sup>56</sup> There are several in the Guy Little Theatrical Photograph Collection held by the Victoria and Albert Museum collection.
- <sup>57</sup> See David Mayer, 'The actress as photographic icon: from early photograph to early film' in Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 83.
- <sup>58</sup> Shearer West, 'The Photographic Portraiture of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry' in Anselm Heinrich, Katherine Newey, and Jeffrey Richards, eds., *Ruskin, the Theatre and Victorian Visual Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 203.
- <sup>59</sup> David Mayer, *op cit*, p. 78.
- <sup>60</sup> Jo Robinson, 'The actress as manager' in Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 169.
- <sup>61</sup> *Man of the World*, 31 May 1890, p. 390.
- <sup>62</sup> 'An Actor's Union, Views of Representative Men, (11) Mrs. Sara Lane', *Stage*, 25 July 1890, p. 11.
- <sup>63</sup> *Era*, 19 August 1899, p. 9.
- <sup>64</sup> *Judy: The London Serio-Comic Journal*, 7 September 1882, p. 112.
- <sup>65</sup> Lane was a keen race goer but there is no evidence that she herself rode.
- <sup>66</sup> *Moonshine*, 4 January 1890.
- <sup>67</sup> Ervin Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 32-4.
- <sup>68</sup> *The Times*, 28 February 1844, p. 7.
- <sup>69</sup> See Jim Davis, *The Britannia Diaries 1863-1875: Selections from the Diaries of Frederick C. Wilton* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1992), p. 5-7 and Jim Davis, 'Scandals to the Neighbourhood': Cleaning-up the East London Theatres', *New Theatre Quarterly* 6:23 (August 1990), p. 235-43.
- <sup>70</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready 1833-1851*, William Toynbee, ed., (London: Chapman and Hall, 1912), Vol.2, p. 80.
- <sup>71</sup> Katherine Newey, *Women's Theatre Writing in Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 36.
- <sup>72</sup> Peter Thomson, *The Cambridge Introduction to English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 258.
- <sup>73</sup> Shearer West, 'Beauty, Ageing and the Body Politic' in Gill Perry with Joseph Roach and Shearer West, *The First Actresses: Nell Gwyn to Sarah Siddons* (London: National Portrait Gallery, London, 2011), p. 116. See also Shearer West, 'Siddons, Celebrity and Regality: Portraiture and the Body of the



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Ageing Actress' in Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds., *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 196-9.

<sup>74</sup> This was especially true when she married Mathews, her toy boy at all of six years her junior; see *Figaro in London*, 23 March 1833 p. 48 in which she is deemed 'old' at thirty-six. The far more substantial age gap between Sam and Sara Lane (19 years) did not raise a comment.

<sup>75</sup> Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> Bryson, 'Semiology', p. 65.

<sup>77</sup> 'Sketches of the Lives of Manager, Authors, and Actresses No. LXI Mrs. Sara Lane', *Stage*, 1 December 1882, p. 10.