

From Analogues to Digital: New Resources in Nineteenth-Century Theatre

Caroline Radcliffe and Kate Mattacks

Despite Wilkie Collins's contention that the Victorian play and novel were 'twin sisters', nineteenth-century theatre, particularly pre-Wildean drama, has largely been neglected.¹ The reasons for this significant omission are numerous and encapsulated in the challenge faced by researchers and readers when confronted by an often fragmentary and disparate body of evidence that bears witness to the immediacy of the theatrical response to contemporary issues. Indeed, as Tracy Davis has succinctly surmised, 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence'.² In a rapidly changing cultural milieu, Victorian drama was uniquely placed to comment upon key issues from political ideologies to fashion trends, literally playing out debates within a framework that moved creatively between the perceived strictures of licensing and copyright laws. The licensing copy and Acting Edition often provide the only surviving material evidence available to scholars once the moment of performance has passed, and here a crucial problem emerges. As fixed records from specific points in a play's continual evolution, how can we assess this evidence? Victorian drama has long been dogged by value judgements over the lack of literary merit, and critical methodology is emerging in favour of what Jacky Bratton terms an 'intertheatrical' approach whereby the textual evidence is read alongside the complex relationships between theatres, players and audiences often manifested in playbills and the history of theatrical family dynasties.³ Indeed, the use of the word 'text' itself is inherently problematic, as it implies a fixity that belies the transient, shifting nature of the performative.

What is clear, however, is that we are at a crucial juncture for nineteenth-century theatre studies, as a number of recent projects have embraced the digital age to make previously inaccessible materials available worldwide. After listing key examples of current projects which aid the move to bring what has been dubbed 'the black hole' of theatre history back into currency, this article will outline the scope, editorial choices and structure behind two major AHRC-funded projects which came to fruition at the end of 2008 and suggest just a few of the numerous avenues for exploration.⁴ The 'Buried Treasures' Project at Royal Holloway, University of London and the British Library provides a catalogue of all the plays that passed through the Lord Chamberlain's Office from 1852 to 1863, revealing a unique picture of interconnections between themes, theatres and playwrights as well as key information on authors, commissioning managers,

dates and the licensing process. The Victorian Plays Project based at the University of Worcester allows free, public access to over 360 printed Acting Editions published by T. H. Lacy from 1848 to 1873, providing searchable materials to encourage research and future performances. These projects catalogue evidence which is the result of the legal processes of licensing and copyright. These specific moments in a play's history create different types of 'text', indicating the slippage between definitions of 'text', 'script' and 'performance'. The texts in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays are frequently devoid of any details concerning the material practices of performance and were submitted to be read and scrutinised by the Examiner for any inappropriate language or action. In contrast, Lacy's Acting Editions were published as both a reading 'text' and a practical, working 'script' for provincial and amateur companies, providing details of stage directions, costumes, cast lists, duration, etc. When viewed in conjunction, the licensing copies and Lacy editions construct an intricate web of connections between not just the specific textual variants, but also between themes, contemporary debates, visual cultures, theatres, families and business networks to form an image of the theatre as multiple-authored, collective cultural response.

This image of the theatre, where the tangible elements of the text and the illusive performative collide, is highly suggestive of issues surrounding the digital medium, perhaps explaining why a number of recent theatre-based projects have embraced digital technology to bring nineteenth-century theatre back into focus. As George P. Landow suggested in his response to **19**'s own forum on digitisation, 'all information technology involves loss and gain', and with digitised performance material, a double bind emerges.⁵ As a textual record, the licensing copy and acting edition have arguably already 'lost' the sense of the performative practices which created a complex interplay between visual, aural and written forms of expression. The strategies of remediation and adaptation that manifested themselves through performances of pictures, debates and scenes onstage were transient and shifting according to the exigencies of audience demand, time and money. Yet to the audience, the illusory performance that changed on a nightly basis was the essence of the drama, not the text. To digitise the theatrical text is arguably to reinstate the primacy of the text, albeit in an illusionary medium which echoes its performative context. This transient, shifting form problematises our reading of Victorian commodity culture, and the disposable materials of playbills, programmes and other ephemera printed on poor

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quality paper represent a challenge in terms of evidence and interpretation. However, numerous digital resources address the problem of fragmentary evidence in disparate places, collecting materials whilst disseminating them on-demand, through visual images that ironically reflect the theatrical experience. These resources include:

The Leeds Playbills

<www.leodis.net/playbills>

The Adelphi Calendar

<www.emich.edu/public/english/adelphi_calendar/>

The Mander and Mitchenson Collection

<www.mander-and-mitchenson.co.uk>

The Music Hall Database

<www.rhul.ac.uk/drama/music-hall/index.asp>

The East End Theatre Project

<www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation/theatre.aspx>

The Ruskinian Theatre Project

<www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/history/research/ruskiniantheatre.htm>

The Pantomime in Scotland Project

<www.gla.ac.uk/departments/theatrefilmtelevisionstudies/research/pantomimeinscotland>

The Templeman Library

<<http://library.kent.ac.uk/library/special/html/specoll/theatre.htm>>

The Moving and Projected Image Project

<www.sall.ex.ac.uk/projects/screenhistorysw>⁶

These projects are clear evidence of what the digital age can provide in terms of increased, inclusive access and conservation of the original. Images of playbills, scripts and photographs alongside often perilously fragile recordings and films constitute a key primary resource for large numbers of readers without endangering the originals. The loss of the physical ‘look and feel’ of the material that some theatre historians mourn is arguably also in contrast with the disposable nature of such ephemera. Furthermore, online resources can collate and disseminate vital core information, with the capacity to be updated and revised in a way that the printed text cannot. This article outlines the

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contribution that the ‘Buried Treasures’ and Victorian Plays projects make within the emerging field of Victorian theatre studies. Together they form an impression of a neglected cultural milieu, articulating the challenge of cataloguing and digitising the performative text.

I

‘Buried Treasures’: The Lord Chamberlain’s Collection, 1852–1863

The ‘Buried Treasures’ Project, initiated jointly by Jacky Bratton at Royal Holloway and Kathryn Johnson at the British Library has now reached the end of its funding from the AHRC. The task of the three research assistants (Laurie Garrison, Caroline Radcliffe and Kate Mattacks) working on the three-year project was to read every play held within the Lord Chamberlain’s Plays Collection at the British Library, from 1852 to 1863. This constitutes exactly one hundred volumes – about 3,500 plays in total. The project can be viewed as a major step forward in terms of theatre research. Until relatively recently, British drama from the mid-nineteenth century was considered a literary low-point and given little serious consideration. Whilst denigrating a substantial period of British drama to the echelons of ‘the popular’, Maurice Willson Disher, in his introduction to melodrama, acknowledged the challenge of sitting and reading hundreds of hurriedly hand-written plays:

Our shelves can soon be burdened with masses of badly printed ‘penny plays’ belonging to the period. To read them all untiringly may not be difficult once they have become an acquired taste, but to discover some sort of order into which these manifestations of the zest for righteousness may naturally fall, seems impossible and very nearly is.⁷

The ‘Buried Treasures’ Project, then, sought to attempt the ‘impossible’, by cataloguing the plays into ‘some sort of order’. What is categorised as ‘British’ late nineteenth-century theatre, as epitomised by Shaw and Wilde, has always been granted prominence over the earlier drama in the British Library’s collection. Studies and editions of mid-Victorian drama tend to focus on a small group of authors – Douglas Jerrold, Dion Boucicault and Tom Taylor immediately spring to mind – with plays such as *Black-Ey’d Susan* (1829), *The Corsican Brothers* (1852), *The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1860) and *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* (1883) reiterated through various editions and commentaries. On

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the periphery, burlesque, spectacle and pantomime have also been represented by the better-known authors – J. R. Planché, F. C. Burnand and H. J. Byron. These authors are indisputably prolific and important, but to regard them as entirely representative of the period is a misrepresentation. The ‘Buried Treasures’ Project reveals other authors, such as William E. Suter, Colin H. Hazlewood and E. Falconer as equally, if not more prolific. It also demonstrates the extent and flexibility of their output in terms of genre and reveals important links between in-house authors, theatres and publishing houses.

Up until now, the manuscript catalogue of the Lord Chamberlain’s Plays Collection (LCP) only covered the period of plays from 1824 to 1851 inclusive, providing a basic author and title index. The main proposal of the project was firstly to extend the manuscript catalogue to 1863 and also to include supplementary information which would enable the reader to gain a wider understanding of the plays’ contexts. The project would give access to plays which were almost literally ‘buried’ due to minimal archiving. The remainder of the plays (post-1851) were catalogued only by typed or hand-written lists – mostly by title only – in chronological order of submission. The majority of plays did not cite author, dates of licence and performance, or venues. The most obvious disadvantage of this system was that unless the title and date of the play were already known, plays could only be discovered through a painstaking process of reading through the catalogue or through an exciting but random game of ‘lucky-dip’. When read in conjunction with Allardyce Nicoll’s index of nineteenth-century plays, authors and venues can often be verified, but although an enormously helpful and impressive resource, Nicoll’s information does not always coincide with the British Library’s catalogue entries. It appears that Nicoll collated his information from other sources – not only from the LCP manuscripts themselves – but from playbills, acting editions and reviews. This is particularly apparent in the number of instances where Nicoll is unable to cite an author, even when the author’s name is inscribed on the front cover of the LCP manuscript. Nicoll does not provide the dates of the licences and it is often ambiguous as to whether he is citing a performance date or the date of submission. Either way, they do not always relate to the ‘Licence received’ and ‘Licence granted’ dates that appear on the manuscripts, raising interesting questions regarding the time lapse between licences granted and actual performance dates. Manuscripts sometimes provide an intended date of performance, subject to change or postponement, whereas Nicoll appears to base many of his

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performance dates on playbills or printed editions which were published post-performance.

Another major variant between Nicoll and the LCP manuscripts is reflected in the plays' titles. The manuscripts provide main titles, alternative titles when given and often show earlier titles and alterations to the original title. Final titles can be ascertained by checking the manuscript against the Lord Chamberlain's Office Day Book (Add.MS.53703). Apart from citing titles of plays, theatres and licensing dates, the Day Book also records instances of plays that had previously been performed under a different title, which then had to reapply for a licence under the new title. Similarly, the Day Book sometimes provides a record of a new translation from a play previously licensed in another language. The most misleading information contained in Nicoll is the lack of differentiation between plays sharing a similar or identical title. Often plays with the same title are variants by different authors, but in many instances they are totally unrelated. Nicoll points to this confusion in the introduction to his alphabetical catalogue stating that 'until such detailed examination is made the titles must perforce be separately recorded'.⁸ This often leads to plays being catalogued in the wrong month or year, or incorrectly cited as having been performed at a different theatre. The 'Buried Treasures' Project succeeds in differentiating similar (or dissimilar) plays because of its remit to read and keyword all of the manuscripts which can then be checked against other manuscripts or against printed editions. Only then does the relationship between the plays become clear.

Given the scale of the archive, the project had to be selective regarding the extent of subsidiary detail provided by the catalogue. It was decided that the catalogue would not attempt to be a substitute for the reader's own research and that there would be strict parameters for any information to be included. The format was constructed so as to refer primarily to the information actually written on the front pages of each manuscript. This usually comprises the title of the play (with any alternatives or deletions), author (when indicated, usually on the cover or sometimes between or after acts), date of licence, intended date for and place of performance (if provided), any information regarding management, lessees or copyists, including addresses, autographs and number of copyists used for each manuscript. Other information follows, such as stamps, seals, letters, illustrations, sketches, cuts and amendments, underlinings and unusual calligraphic features, specific music cues, stage directions, dramatis personae, actors' names and

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references to props. Analogues and sources, where known, are also indicated, guiding the reader to further materials from both within and outside the collection. The manuscript is then cross-referenced with the Day Book which stipulates cuts and licence refusals. With reference to censorship, it is notable that there were very few instances of actual refusals for licences; it is not always clear why licences were refused and most of the correspondence relating to censorship for this period is held at the National Archive at Kew and must be consulted separately. Final catalogue enhancements consisted of references to variants or attributions by Nicoll and published titles by T. H. Lacy.

One of the differences between the material of the Victorian Plays Project and the LCP manuscript collection is the non-selective nature of the LCP plays as a whole. In effect, the LCP Collection is a record of all contemporary drama licensed to be performed within the period of the collection. The only plays that did not have to be submitted for examination by the Lord Chamberlain's Office were ones that had already received licences (Shakespeare's plays, for instance, would clearly fall under this category) or ones that had somehow slipped through the net, with managers risking prosecution by performing them without a licence. Another major difference between the plays represented by each project is that the majority of the plays bound in the LCP Collection were hurriedly copied in the most minimal way possible in order to reach the Lord Chamberlain's Office in time for licensing, often arriving there only a couple of days prior to the proposed date of performance and in many cases receiving their licence after the first performance. These texts dispense with any lists of dramatis personae, settings or stage directions, furnishing the reader with a bare, somewhat de-contextualised and de-theatricalised dialogue to work from. The contrast is striking when a writer like Suter, who habitually included extensive stage directions and music cues, submits his own, autographed copies. Few prompt copies are extant in the collection, but they too provide more detailed examples of the medium in its wider context. The collection includes the plays which were refused licences providing interesting evidence of the censorship process.

An aspect of the catalogue entries that provoked a certain amount of controversy was the editorial decision to include keywords to each play. At the symposium for the project (held at Royal Holloway, September 2008) there appeared to be a general unease with the concept of keywording. It was generally felt that keywords were a prescriptive

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and subjective map of the text and that it should be left to the individual researcher to discover their own themes and connections. There is no doubt, however, that the keywords have opened lines and relationships between analogues, remediations and genres that would have been impossible to discover without reading the whole collection. Due to the nature of the cataloguing system and the intention to upload the whole catalogue in PDF form onto the project's website (<www.rhul.ac.uk/Drama/Research/chamberlains-plays/index.html>) these connections will be immediately accessible and can only serve to widen the possibilities of research. The keywords also make the collection more accessible to other disciplines such as music, languages and science. Without keywords it would be almost impossible to trace all the plays that referred, for example, to popular song or mesmerism. The new catalogue also includes the genre description listed on the manuscript and in the Lord Chamberlain's Office Daybook. Although the plays are often described under many different, specific genre headings – for instance, a burlesque might be termed burlesque, extravaganza, classical extravaganza or burletta – the plays can be widely placed into the following inclusive genres: burlesques, farces, operas, comedies, operettas, dramas, foreign-language plays, pantomimes and entertainments. It is interesting that Lacy's Acting Editions specify generic names that differ from the ones written on the LCP plays – perhaps to attract a more specific market.

One of the surprising outcomes of the project is the discovery of the vast proportion of plays that are adaptations, remediations or of French origin. The numerous adaptations of Dickens' novels, for example, will clearly attract scholarly interest. Theatre historians have taken for granted the fact that much of British mid-nineteenth-century drama was adapted from the French, but there has been little scholarship on this fascinating and socially revealing cross-cultural exchange. The collection includes a large body of French printed plays (most of which contain illustrations, cast lists and details of first performances in Paris) sent to the Examiner for approval and transferred to an annual season of French theatre at the St. James's Theatre in London. Popular, contemporary authors such as Victorien Sardou and Octave Feuillet are represented, as well as editions of classic texts by Jean Racine. It also comprises adaptations and translations in manuscript form from Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas. Apart from direct transferrals from the French, English authors also chose settings based on historical French subjects. For example, the pre-revolutionary text *The Loves of Arcadia* (1860) by Mary Elizabeth

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Braddon, better known for *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), can be read in strong contrast to Dickens's tale of incarceration in the Bastille, refashioned from his novel, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). Napoleon was a successful subject for dramatic interpretation, presenting spectacular opportunities for casting horses and re-enacting battle scenes on stage. In addition, a huge number of French-language farces and English translations and adaptations exist in the collection which could be read as a revision of the female role in Victorian domestic comedy. The French-style farce demonstrates a far more liberal attitude to marital relations, women's infidelity and 'ennui', than has previously been assumed when considering British drama. French operas are also included in the collection – Giacomo

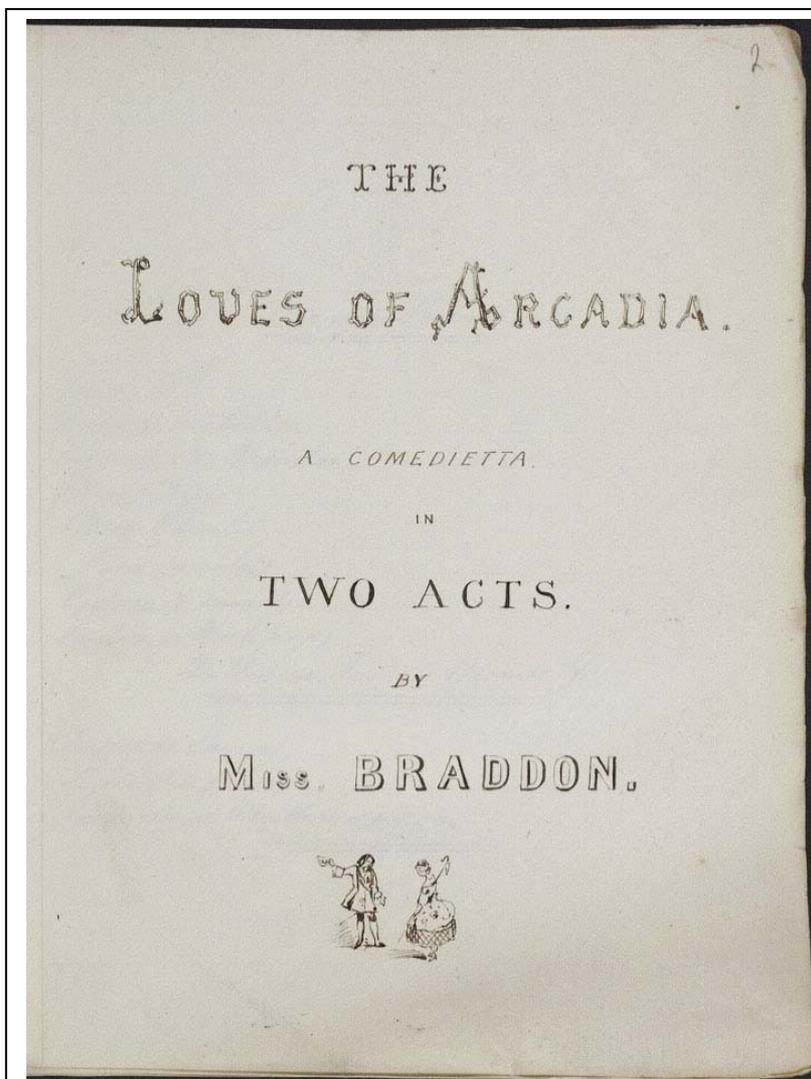


Fig. 1 Title page from the manuscript *The Loves of Arcadia* by M. E. Braddon. Lord Chamberlain's Plays, British Library, Add. 52990 N.

Meyerbeer's *Dinorah* (1859) appeared in various incarnations as opera, drama and burlesque. Jacques Offenbach is also substantially represented. The collection deserves the attention of French scholars, appealing to a number of related disciplines. Viewed as a whole, it raises questions about the indisputable influence of the French drama on British drama, with many plays yet to be identified as adaptations and inspirations from the French originals.

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Other little-researched areas of the collection are the English versions of Italian opera and, indeed, the number of little-known English operas themselves. These have perhaps been overlooked due to the separate disciplinary nature of the literary and music collections at the British Library; music researchers do not, perhaps, realise the wealth of material contained within the LCP collection. Another similarly overlooked genre is the comic operetta, which could be considered as the forerunner to late nineteenth-century musical-comedy. Plays also provide a testimony of the most popular music of the time with songs such as *The Ratcatcher's Daughter* or the minstrel song *The Camptown Races* (generally referred to as 'Doo da day') appearing over and over again across the genres.

Pantomimes feature almost exclusively throughout the November and December volumes. What becomes apparent through the detailed overview of each year enabled by viewing the PDF format is the theatrical topicality of the pantomimes. Similar to burlesque, they reflect and summarise the theatrical year through their references to and parodies of the preceding year's drama. Most pantomimes also include the 'comic scenes' which are minutely-detailed descriptions of the Harlequinade, including set descriptions, all comic business and tricks and any dialogue or written signs that appear on stage. From these extremely detailed and vivid accounts one could go a long way towards reconstructing the lost art of the British Harlequinade.

We have touched very briefly on a few areas which deserve further attention as examples of buried themes and repertoires – the intention of this article is not to provide an analysis of the contents of the collection and its particular plays, but to highlight the many areas of research that remain undiscovered, yet now more easily accessed. Whilst the Lord Chamberlain's Plays form a unique, near complete collection of manuscripts for the professional theatre, the material for the Victorian Plays Project illustrates the resulting industry in publishing playscripts for practical use by provincial and amateur companies.

II

The Victorian Plays Project: T. H. Lacy's Acting Editions, 1848–1873

Funded by an AHRC grant, the Victorian Plays Project (<www.victorian.worc.ac.uk>) began in 2003, under the direction of Professor Richard Pearson at the University of Worcester. Researched by Kate Mattacks, the project's primary aim was to preserve and

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supply playtexts of popular London productions, the vast majority of which were previously unavailable to scholars and practitioners alike. Over 1,400 plays were published as acting editions by T. H. Lacy from 1848 to 1873, constituting a huge and varied resource of material from melodramas, historical plays, comedies and burlesques to more unusual squibs, sketches and monologues. The project fell into several distinct phases: producing a detailed catalogue of all the plays (2003–5), creating a searchable database of selected plays using xml encoding (2006) and generating e-texts of over 380 plays (2006–8).

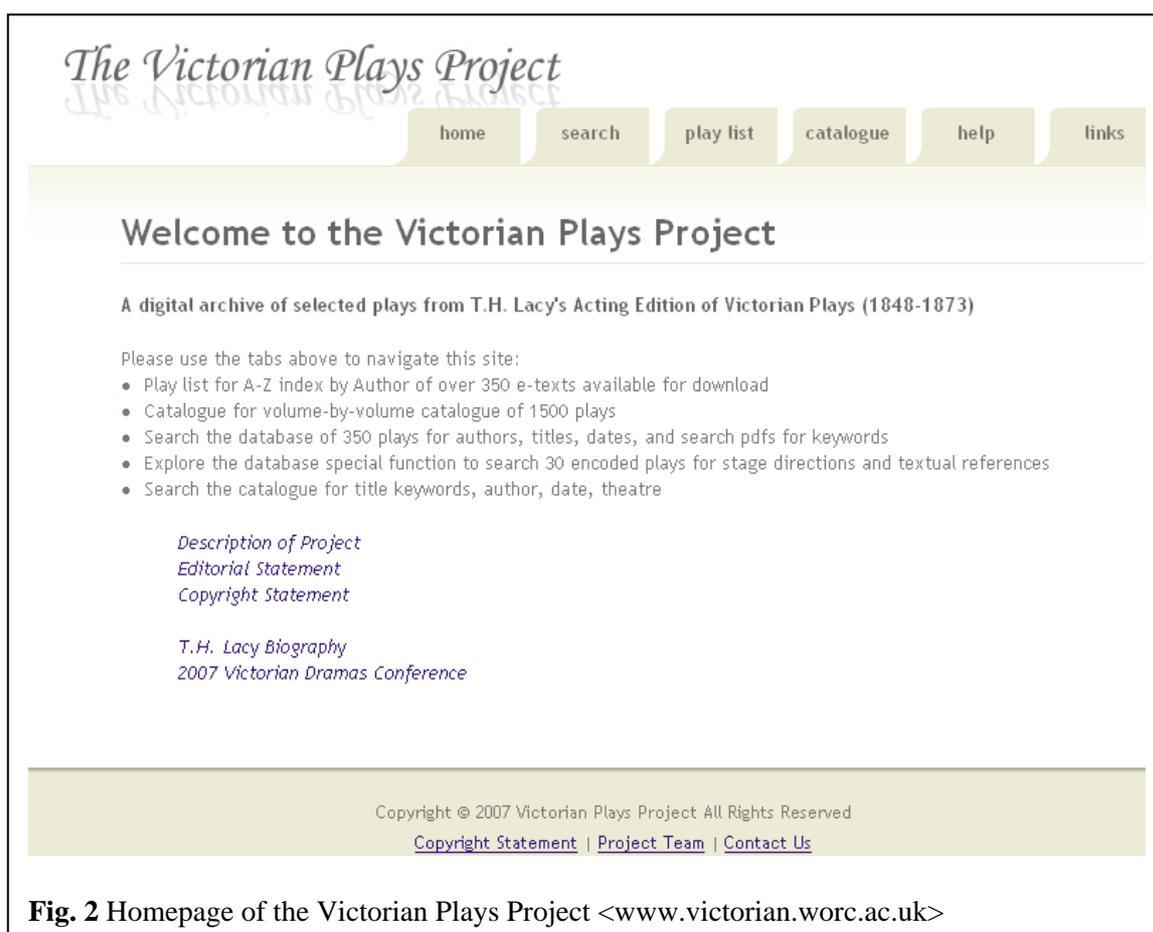


Fig. 2 Homepage of the Victorian Plays Project <www.victorian.worc.ac.uk>

The project faced several challenges in terms of material, editorial practice and methodology. Basic information such as the year of publication was impossible to discern, and discrepancies between the play's first performance and Lacy's print version abound. As a result, the project records both the dates for collective volumes and gives the original performance date on the website. The large number of plays printed by Lacy meant that only a quarter could be digitised. How could one play be prioritised over another,

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particularly given that Lacy's own selection policy was unclear? Following a career as an actor, stage-manager and theatre owner, Lacy's publishing career began with the purchase of Cumberland and Duncombe's Acting Editions. Lacy became one of the leading theatrical publishers, and despite his often dubious business practices, his choice of materials reflect a circle of friends that included Mark Lemon, Tom Taylor and John Maddison Morton. Did his publishing practice influence the popularity of certain playwrights or the longevity of particular versions of plays? The editorial practice of the Victorian Plays Project is more transparent, as we endeavoured to choose plays based upon the following criteria: plays that were unavailable elsewhere; plays that responded to a key event or cultural concern, or had been mentioned in novels, diaries or letters and therefore provided a frame of reference for the Victorians; and plays that demonstrated an analysis of visual (e.g. photography, art, sketches) or theatrical culture. Unusual texts such as monologues and the few plays selected by Lacy that were written by women were also included. Lacy's 'pirate' versions of *The Jewess* (1857) and *The Corsican Brothers* figured high on the list of inclusions. In rare instances, the physical condition of a play was prohibitive to digital scanning in terms of heavy foxing or paper transparency.

The most experimental part of the website appears in the form of a searchable database of thirty plays. These were encoded in xml to secure their longevity using TEI.lite and Oxygen software, but this format did not lend itself easily to the multiplicity and creative invention of plays. The use of songs, tableaux, extra scenes, scenes within scenes, stage directions and allusions required new ways of definition in order for the search engine to find them. In conjunction with the Arts and Humanities Data Service at Oxford, a form of categorisation was developed to identify direct references to famous characters, places, buildings, people, etc. Multiple definitions of stage directions were needed, as exits, gestures and entrances were never simple and nearly always involved props, directions or emotions. In order to avoid a prescriptive approach, complex allusions, probably designed to avoid the censor's gaze, were not tagged.

The final phase of the project involved collaboration between Birmingham Central Library, who held the collection, Birmingham City University who digitised the plays and an editorial team based at Worcester. The PDF format was used for the majority of the plays for the purposes of accessibility and inclusivity (plays can be searched, font types and sizes changed). Photographic images in TIF format have been lodged at Birmingham

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Central Library to ensure the preservation of such a rare complete run of Lacy's Acting Editions.⁹ When the photographic images were manipulated into PDF format, a number of problems arose. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) packages were often unable to cope with the variant fonts or marks on the page caused by inferior grade paper, leading to corruptions in words and typesetting. The editorial team scrupulously checked each play to eradicate the errors such as 'otthers stage left' for 'Enters stage left'. All spelling inconsistencies (including 'trowsers' for 'trousers') and incorrect punctuation were noted and readers are invited to give feedback should any inconsistencies remain. Once these challenges were overcome, the site was designed to maximise the potential for each play. The catalogue and list of digitised plays are searchable. There is a facility to search the PDF of a play before downloading it to assess the frequency of a keyword. Thirty of the plays have been fully encoded to enable detailed searches for names, places and people, etc, or these keywords can be accessed individually. Once downloaded, the plays themselves are searchable through Acrobat software functions.

Whilst the playtexts are fixed records which belie the shifting nature of the performance mode, they offer a rare glimpse into the tastes, debates and remediation practices of their day and provide a huge corpus of plays which could be revived on stage and television. The speed at which a playwright could capitalise upon public demand meant that a play could be written, licensed and performed within a week. An inspection of Lacy's catalogue for the year 1851 reveals, as one might expect, a prolonged interest in the Great Exhibition. However, other trends from fashion to facial hair are equally identifiable throughout the List. When read alongside the Lord Chamberlain's Collection, significant cultural moments can be revealed through the lists of plays on common topics. The potential for such a resource is almost unlimited, both in term of research and performance revivals. The restoration of the Georgian Playhouse in Bury St. Edmunds is testimony to the increased interest in the period's drama. Given that Lacy's Acting Editions provide a full script, complete with stage cues, lighting cues and explanatory notes, their heightened profile may yet attract the attention of the BBC which is ever keen to repeatedly dramatise Victorian novels as costume dramas. Indeed the creative recycling of texts, costumes and star actors were familiar tactics of Georgian and Victorian theatre.

The interdisciplinary nature of many of the plays makes them an ideal locus for wider debates on the Victorian theatre's symbiotic relationship with visual culture, but we

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need to be aware of the context in which certain plays were prioritised over others. The theatre's use of paintings, adaptations of literary texts, contemporary allusions and records of historical moments allow the texts to be used as another source of primary evidence alongside those more traditionally studied at under- and postgraduate level. For example, H. T. Craven's *Meg's Diversion* (1866) from volume 73 contains a tableau scene recreating Philip H. Calderon's painting *Broken Vows* (1856), which also appears as the frontispiece. Yet plays were also written specifically as a vehicle for star actors in an era before royalty payments or effective copyright protection, encouraging repeated self-commodification. The tension between theatre practitioners and publishers was epitomised in Lacy's public image. Labelled a pirate despite his work for the Royal Theatrical Fund, his business practices merit further investigation. Did his reprints of early Georgian dramas signal a revival or merely that he had bought the playwright's estate and copyright assigns?¹⁰ How did he select plays for publishing? Lacy's List indicates certain affiliations with the *Punch* circle and writers from the Dramatic Author's Society. It appears to be a balanced *oeuvre* encompassing all the genres from drama, farce and burlesque to pantomime, but when compared to the list of plays sent for licensing a different picture emerges. A quick summary of the plays published by Lacy and licensed in 1860 reveals Lacy's prioritising of comic genres over the major dramas and pantomimes. As the table below shows, he published nearly half of all the farces licensed and a quarter of the comedies. Lacy's publication of all the extravaganzas in contrast to a single pantomime and one opera is difficult to explain if his market was solely provincial and amateur companies on a small budget.

Genre on Licensing MS.	LCP	Lacy's
Farce	33	15
Drama	93	12
Ballet	1	0
Opera (inc. Operetta)	11	1
Burlesque (inc. Burletta)	12	5
Comedy (inc. Comedietta, Vaudeville)	45	9
Epilogue	1	0
Extravaganza	6	6
Sketch	4	1
Interlude	3	0

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Spectacle	2	0
Pantomime	20	1
Romantic Play	1	0
Entertainments	1	0

Table 1: Comparative List of Plays Licensed and Published in 1860.

His own budget may rationalise the strikingly disproportionate printing of only a tenth of all the major dramas, as Lacy paid playwrights by length, typically giving writers such as Hazlewood twenty pounds per act at the height of his career. The drama category contains what Lacy's Acting Editions would later divide into the genres of historical drama, domestic drama, melodrama and nautical drama potentially to aid the selection process for amateurs. What this brief overview doesn't show is Lacy's practice concerning drama. Of the twelve dramas printed in 1860 a quarter were essentially pirated versions of their more famous counterparts. Rather than pay Boucicault, a champion for the right to royalties, for *The Colleen Bawn*, Lacy commissioned T. E. Wilks to write *Eily O'Connor*. Lacy's Acting Edition of *Holly Bush Hall, or The Track in the Snow* (1860) by Suter was a similar product of Lacy's attitudes towards the multiple-authored creative context of plays, but his edition of *Ruy Blas* (1860) was effectively a direct plagiarism of Edmund Falconer's manuscript. Any charges of literary or dramatic theft were, however, distinctly problematic given that Falconer's own play was an adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel. What is clear is the fertile ground uncovered by the Victorian Plays Project and the 'Buried Treasures' Project when read together.

III

These projects raise key questions concerning the nature of nineteenth-century theatre practice. What happened in between the often skeletal licensing text and the acting edition and indeed beyond? At what point was a playscript published and under what condition was it selected? Is the licensing manuscript evidence of self-regulation? Prompt-scripts and acting copies of Lacy's Editions suggest a number of strategies employed by theatrical practitioners to avoid the gaze of the censor, including amendments, timing submissions and meaning derived through visual tactics. For example, the prompt copy of the

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19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 8 (2009), www.19.bbk.ac.uk

unattributed *Daft Dora* (1853) indicates several key additions made after the licence was granted, including an alternative ending and the appearance of a lewd song (utterly out of context) concerning an opera singer who falls from favour and ‘ends up on her back’.¹¹ The practice of adding songs to plays in the Britannia Theatre, formerly the Britannia Saloon, came to the attention of the Lord Chamberlain and Samuel Lane, the manager, was ordered to submit copies of working scripts for further examination. A letter from the Lord Chamberlain’s office to the Lord Chamberlain himself on 15 August 1844 reveals that the managers of the Britannia and Albert Saloons in the East End of London attempted to pass a particularly violent trio of plays through the licensing process whilst the Lord Chamberlain was away in Aberystwyth.¹² The plays entitled *The Murder House, or the Cheats of Chick Lane, The Thieves’ House, or The Murder Cellar of Fleet Ditch* and *George Barrington, or The Life of a Pickpocket* were effectively glorified accounts of criminals’ activities, and the later 1862 version of *The Life and Adventures of George Barrington, or, a Hundred Years Ago* by Mrs Henry Young for the Effingham is a rare example of censoring in red pen by the Chief Examiner.¹³ The textual nature of the material sent for licensing purposes only allowed the censorship of words, most commonly oaths, or suggestive remarks. J. T. Tindale’s *In to Win, or, The Jockey’s Strategem* [sic], performed at the Queen’s Theatre on 14 August 1861, is amended in pencil, replacing the words ‘o damn’ with ‘oh dear’ throughout.¹⁴ J. E. Soden’s *Wanted a Wife and Child* for the Soho Theatre on 10 December 1860 was required to remove the line, ‘I wish you to allow me to treat you as my wife for this night only’.¹⁵ However, lewd or sexually explicit behaviour could be relocated in the visual forms of gesture or costume, often missing from the licensing texts. As the character Bluebeard of J. V. Bridgman’s *Bluebeard, or, Harlequin and Freedom in Her Island Home* (1860) illustrates, his ‘sole resource is pantomimic action’ whilst performing a ‘suggestive dance’ derived from a stage direction found in the acting edition rather than the licensing text.¹⁶ The addition of stage directions is a key difference between Lacy’s Acting Editions and the majority of licensing manuscripts, but it is difficult to discern at what point Lacy obtained the publishing manuscript. His reprints from the stock of Cumberland’s *Minor Drama* which he purchased to begin his publishing career declare that the plays are only printed after they have been seen on stage. However, comparisons between the order of licensed plays and Lacy’s published versions reveal a different picture. For Lacy was able to publish

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plays in a different chronological order to the date sequence in which the Examiner received and licensed them, suggesting the existence of more than one manuscript copy in addition to that of the working prompt-script that the company would have been using before permission had been obtained. Some of the license manuscripts contain stage directions and do not differ from the version Lacy printed, such as those by Suter. What Lacy's Acting Editions added was a detailed set of cast-lists and times of the first performances, descriptions of costumes and the duration of the performance. The presence of the cast-lists is particularly useful when re-reading licensing manuscripts as character's names are often abbreviated, causing confusion as to their interrelationships and even gender.

What becomes clear is that only when the materials are identified and become available can we begin to challenge the long-held assumptions about Victorian drama and explore the complex interconnections between remediated cultural forms and frames of reference. Much of the material evidence remains buried, particularly prompt-scripts and annotated, working copies of Acting Editions, suggesting future digitisation projects of benefit. A development of the 'Buried Treasures' Project is the increasing number of e-editions of manuscripts made available online with introductions at:

<<http://rhul.ac.uk/Drama/Research/chamberlains-plays/index.html>>

Only when such resources are enhanced can Victorian drama be brought back into currency and the nature of material practice can be debated alongside the textual evidence.

¹ Wilkie Collins, dedication to *Basil* [1852] (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1990), p. xxxvii.

² Tracy C. Davis, keynote speech at 'Buried Treasures' Symposium at Royal Holloway, 27 September 2008.

³ See Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴ See the comments of Colin Blumenau, Artistic Director of the Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds, available in the press pack at http://secure.theatreroyal.org/PEO/site/theatre_info/pg_downloads/re-open%presspack.PDF

⁵ George P. Landow, 'Material Object, Virtual Spaces', Digitisation and Materiality Forum in *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (2008), <www.19.bbk.ac.uk>, p. 3.

⁶ To this list we could also add a number of digitised catalogues, including those at the New York Public Library <www.nypl.org> and the Garrick Club <www.garrickclub.co.uk>.

⁷ M. Willson Disher, *Melodrama: Plots that Thrilled* (London: Rockcliff, 1954), p. xiii.

⁸ Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1600–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), vol. VI, p. xii.

⁹ Interestingly, the British Library holds a further three supplementary volumes of Lacy's Plays, but these contain mostly duplicates and a few rare plays which did not appear in his List, including Colin H. Halzewood's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1863).

¹⁰ His copyright ledgers, located in the Samuel French Business Archive 81/2366 held at the Victorian & Albert Theatre Museum Archive indicate he was often offered playwright's complete manuscripts. See Box 2, Assignments Ledger ff. 181 for details of Lacy buying estates of playwright from Mrs Hale on the understanding he will pay the administrative costs. This box also contains letters and papers relating to his purchase of T. J. Haines's estate which entailed manuscripts and copyright assigns.

¹¹ See the Introduction to the e-edition of *Daft Dora* at the Lord Chamberlain's Plays Project Website, <www.rhul.ac.uk/Drama/Research/chamberlains-plays/index.html>.

¹² See letter from John Kemble dated 15 August 1844 and the Lord Chamberlain's response dated 23 August 1844, pasted into the last leaves of the Lord Chamberlain's Office Daybook Add. 52073, Years 1824–51. The correspondence from the Lord Chamberlain's Office is held at the Public Records Office, Kew.

¹³ See entry for Add. 53015 I of LCP.

¹⁴ See Add. 53006 A, LCP.

¹⁵ See Add. 52998 T, LCP, ff. 20, v – ff. 21, r.

¹⁶ See Add. 52999 Q, LCP, ff. 6v (p. 10) of a printed text used to license the play.