

THE SOCIETY FOR THEATRE RESEARCH

Forthcoming essays in Theatre Notebook

Christopher Butcher:

'A Private Public': Talfourd's *Ion* before Performance
and the Evidence of the Huntingdon Letters

Anthony Binns:

Rediscovering H. G. Pélissier:
A Concert Party Impresario and Satirist on the London Stage

Anette Rubery:

'Thus let me wipe Dishonour from my Name':
Peg Woffington as Lothario in *The Fair Penitent*

Mariko Ichikawa:

'All the Doores': A Stage Direction
Indicating More than Two Stage Doors

Terry Jenkins:

The Private Life of George Colman the Younger - An Adopted Son

William Baker and Maxwell Hoover:

Charles Reade: Charles Kean, Dion Boucicault and John Hollingshead

Axel Staehler:

A Play 'for our times' and the 'explosive setting':
The Genesis of Arnold Wesker's *Blood Libel*

Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson:

A Hundred Years of the Funeral Procession
and Dirge in *Romeo and Juliet*

Christopher Butcher:

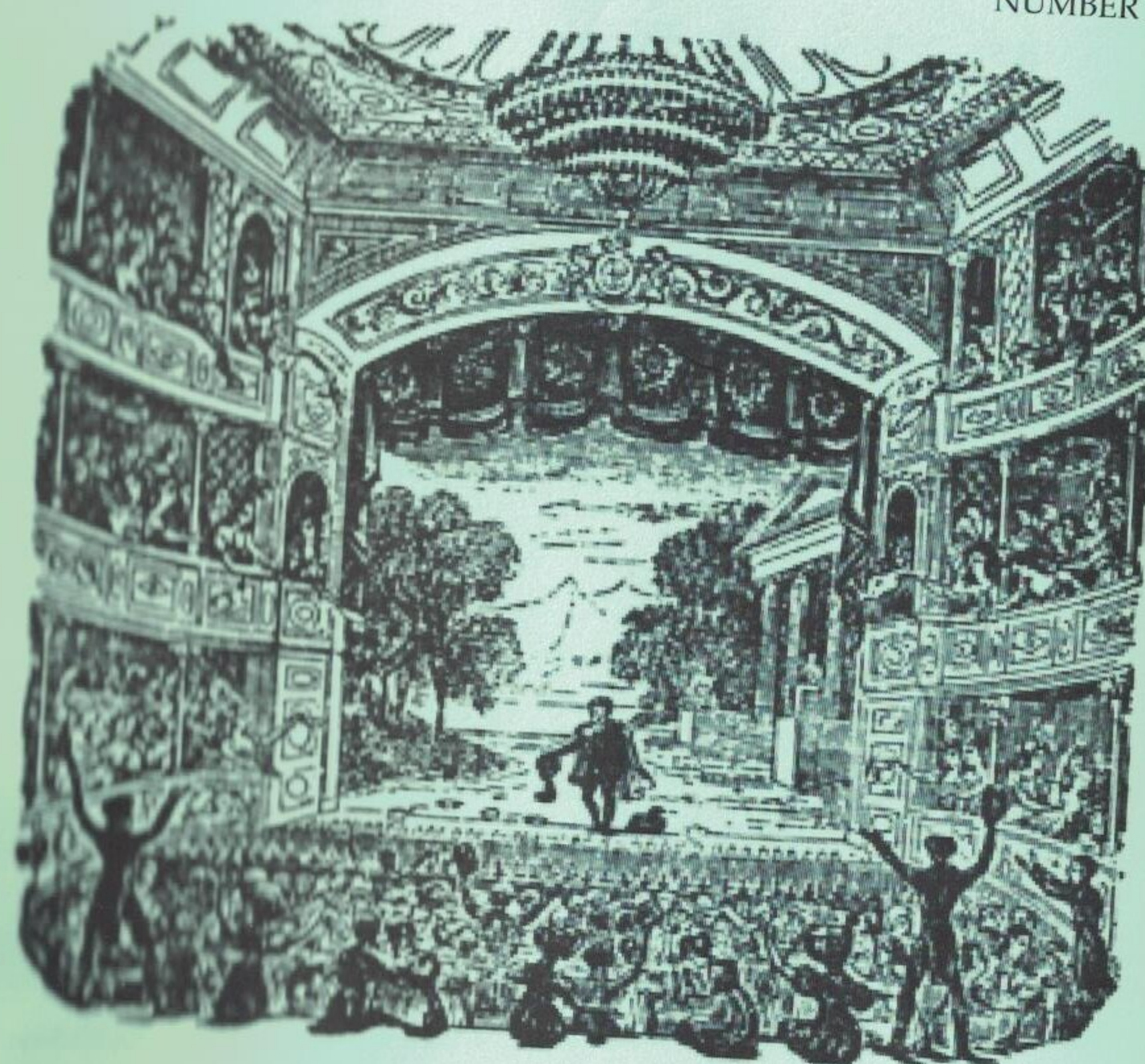
Bringing *Ion* to the Stage: Talfourd and Macready

THEATRE NOTEBOOK

*A Journal of the History and Technique
of the British Theatre*

VOLUME 75

NUMBER 1



2021

The Society for Theatre Research

FOUNDED 1948

CHARLES READE, DRAMATIST, AND BENJAMIN WEBSTER OF THE ADELPHI

WILLIAM BAKER

Distinguished Chair Qiantang River Professor, Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, PRChina. Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Northern Illinois University. Co-Editor, Year's Work in English Studies [English Association: OUP]. Editor, George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies [Penn State UP].

Today Charles Reade (1814-1884) is not only a forgotten novelist but also a forgotten luminary of the Victorian theatre. His plays and adaptations, largely from the French, and his collaborations with leading Victorian dramatists such as Tom Taylor or Dion Boucicault, were staged at the leading London theatres, attracted the interest of prominent contemporary managers, and were performed by the leading actors of the time. His dramas also toured the provinces and were performed in the USA. This article draws upon unpublished letters to explore his relationship with the dramatist and manager of the Haymarket and other theatres, Benjamin Nottingham Webster (1797-1882). In addition to illuminating neglected facets of Reade's life, the letters reveal his attitude to copyright, dramatic writing, theatrical production of his work and Reade's concern with, amongst other elements, choosing the appropriate casting, scenery, and music for his work. The letters also demonstrate the cardinal importance of women in his life and work.¹

Reade is largely known today in discussions of sensation fiction and for declarations on copyright; otherwise, he is largely an obscure figure in spite of the fact that his novels sold almost as many copies as his nearest rival, Charles Dickens, and on occasion outpaced sales for George Eliot and Wilkie Collins. In the words of Mary Poovey, Reade enjoyed "enormous popularity

among readers throughout the English-speaking world, as measured in book sales" (434). Richard Fantina in his *Victorian Sensational Fiction: The Daring Work of Charles Reade* emphasises Reade as a novelist who "relished his role as an iconoclast and outspoken advocate for reform in social institutions, most famously his campaigns for improvement in the conditions in prisons and lunatic asylums in novels such as *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856), *Hard Cash* (1863) and *A Terrible Temptation* (1871)" and notes that "In *A Woman Hater* (1876) and other works, Reade promoted equal rights for women" (1-2). Furthermore, as Fantina writes, Reade's "frank portrayals of sexuality, including passages in which homoeroticism seems obvious to today's readers, outraged many critics" (2).

Others have discussed Reade's attitude to copyright. Robert Macfarlane, for instance, in his *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* writes of "Reade's own gospel of authorship: that literary creativity is a transformative rather than a generative power, and that all knowledge is textually based" (141). When accused, for instance, of plagiarism for his novel *The Wandering Heir* (1872), Reade responded in his *Trade Malice: A Personal Narrative* "the novelist cannot invent; he must have recourse to books ... My only crime was this: I have written too well ... labour, research, and, above all, a close condensation, to be found in few other living English novelists, all these qualities combined have produced a strong, yet finite, story." (*Trade Malice* 18).

In her "Introduction" to her edition of *Dickensian Dramas*, Jacky Bratton observes that "to cycle and recycle prose works into plays, and vice or versa, with little regard to who had first written them, was entirely normal in the on-demand writing culture to which Dickens ... belonged" (xviii). She draws attention to H. Philip Bolton's observation that Reade "wrote both novels and plays. In permutation of the possibilities, Reade also took plays from novels by others, novels from plays by others, plays from his own novels, and novels from his own plays" (Bolton 36). Essentially, Reade practised the art of remediation or transmediation.

The rise and fall of his literary reputation has been considered at some length, notably by Mary Poovey, writing at the beginning of the present century that "the only way one can introduce Reade's name into the discourse of literary criticism these days is to ... treat his work as a symptomatic but forgotten part of our discipline's history" (450). Reade deserves another consideration not simply because of his associations with other leading Victorian writing luminaries, his enormous sales, his ability to write successfully in both the dramatic and fictional genres, and his proprietorial

attitude towards his works which he treated as his children. The focus on Reade as a novelist cavalier with notions of copyright ignores his involvement in many genres and his deep devotion to the theatre, in which he thought he could make money: indeed, as Tracy C. Davis has demonstrated, theatrical fortunes could be made and then lost in the Victorian theatre (*Economics* 157–305; “The Show Business Economy”). Elton E. Smith writes that Reade and his nephew Compton Reade, in their jointly written memoirs of Reade, admit that he “considered drama to be the apex of all art and to be superior to poetry, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, and especially the lowly art of the novel” (49). Reflecting on his career in his memoirs, Reade relates his early struggles against the bias of London theatre managers for adaptations of French plays and describes their preference for the work of recognized dramatists, he writes of the importance of women in his life and work, and he tells of how he eventually succeeded in being a highly financially successful dramatist due to audience rather than critical acclaim (Reade and Reade 322–25).

A fresh perspective on Reade’s engagement with the theatre and his drama emerges from his unpublished correspondence with a leading but now largely neglected Victorian actor and theatre manager. Benjamin Nottingham Webster wrote at least 37 plays and in 1837 took over the management of the Haymarket Theatre, London. At the Haymarket, “Webster was criticized for his lack of interest in decoration, but it is to his credit that during his management he chose to present the highest standards of acting and writing that were available at the time”. His *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) entry concludes that Webster

was a spirited manager so far as the engagement of good actors and the encouragement of playwrights was concerned, but was out of tune with the times in respect of stage mounting and the employment of supernumeraries. Any assessment of his career must nevertheless acknowledge that, however ephemeral his performances and however trivial his own dramatic writings, he was a theatre manager of vision and integrity keeping alive the English dramatic tradition at a time when it was sorely pressed. (Knight and McDonald)

Webster initially produced Reade’s first play, *The Ladies’ Battle or Un Duel En Armour, A Comedy in Three Acts*, first performed at the Royal Olympic Theatre on Wednesday 7 May 1851 (Parrish 167), and Webster revived it at the Haymarket in the autumn of 1851. It was a translation from Augustin Eugene Scribe and Ernest Wilfried Legouv  s *Un Duel En Amour*, first

performed in Paris at The Com  die-Fran  aise on 17 March 1851 that Reade, according to his ODNB entry, “had seen during one of his many visits to Paris as a dealer in violins” (Edwards).

Reade’s breakthrough as a writer was as a dramatist. In November 1851 Reade, then in his rooms at Magdalen College Oxford, wrote to Webster in an unpublished letter now in the Parrish Collection at Princeton University, that he was “not so vain as to think I can teach you any part of your business, and if I lay before you opinions, I merely submit them to your more practical judgment” (Letter to Benjamin Webster, November 1851). He continued, “but my own little business, far more contracted than yours, I do understand: and one part of it I understand so well that no Man can teach it me and that is how every word in a work of mine should be uttered so as to make it tell upon an Audience: of this knowledge I have the monopoly”. After praising two of the leading actors—Henry Leigh “Murray knows his part and all the business and a great deal more Stirling”²—Reade added, “but neither of them know all the words of every part & their capabilities as I do” and continues:

It follows that here and there the actors who have not, as Stirling and Murray have, heard me read my work, would have learned something from me at Rehearsal. If they are as clever as those two they would have gathered as much. For it is the Great who learn from the little more than the little from the Great — Having now explained myself it remains for me to show you that I am not one to force unwisely myself or my opinions.

Reade’s following paragraph reveals that already friction had occurred between him and Webster: Reade perceives that Webster regards him as too interfering in production and rehearsal matters. Reade writes to Webster:

You have allowed it to appear that you do not wish to see me at the Rehearsal of my own Play— that is enough; of course I shall not come: I must throw myself on your candour. Of course in my cell at Oxford I am not well informed. I saw a notice that the company (Haymarket) was to meet on Monday and I was told L.B. was to be played on Tuesday: this gave me some anxiety, and made me fear that the play being “unimportant”, it’s “difficulty” might be undervalued.

I was wrong there; I ought not to be misled by the notice but ought to have given your experienced management more credit —

I feel now that it will at all events be well done and accept my personal thanks for your personal assurance of this.

Reade's wish to attend rehearsal was not an unusual one at the time. It was not uncommon for dramatists to be present during rehearsal as may be seen from the presence of, for instance, Wilkie Collins (1824-1889), Charles Dickens (1812-1870), or Dion Boucicault (1820-1890) at rehearsals. The distinguished actor, Squire Bancroft (1841-1926), who with his wife the equally distinguished actress Marie Effie Wilton (1839-1921), both of whom became actor-managers (Baker et al. 2.264), gives an eloquent account of Wilkie Collins's participation in rehearsals in his *Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft* (Baker et al. 1.368-75). In common with the Bancrofts and others involved with the theatre, Reade too became involved with theatrical management and lost money in the process (Wheeler 317; Elwin 256-58; Hammett 20-22).

A letter from Reade to Fanny Stirling dated 2 November 1851, also today at the Parrish Collection, Princeton University, reveals some of his attitudes towards the theatre and an acute awareness of financial issues involved with production and performance. Writing again from Magdalen College Oxford, Reade, in a letter notable for its staccato paragraphing, tells Stirling who is rehearsing the part of Countess D'Autreval, the main character in Reade's adaptation of *The Ladies' Battle*, for performance at the Haymarket that

The Management of the Haymarket is really superfluous sharp in this one instance —

I do not feel greedy about "Ladies' Battle" and I think I do not look greedy. I make you a present of it for twelve Nights.

If they play it at all after that they shall give me £1. per Night.

Other-wise I shall have my throat cut with my own Play:

For Ladies' Battle is 100 miles above the average of Three Act Plays, as you know —

How can they be wrong? At the end of 12 Nights if LB does not prove to be worth to them £5 per Night they will escape my £1 by playing it no more, and no harm done —

I cannot tell you how glad I am you are at the Haymarket — all my youthful reminiscences are connected with that Theatre — I also hate the construction of our other Theatres. The Pits run into a sort of slum under the boxes. What is the consequence? You have a set of fellows sufficiently in the Theatre to disturb it chatting, and sufficiently out of it not to be able to see the niceties of acting.

It will give me great pleasure to return to the Haymarket and see you act Countess D'Autreval or anything two thirds as good —

Mean-time I wish you the prime blessings of Health and strength and Spirits.

Reade's remarks concerning the pit and audiences are of interest. Jim Davies and Victor Emeljanow writing on "Victorian and Edwardian audiences" note that "the pit in all theatres occupied the best vantage point from which to view the stage, and performers took the responsiveness of the pit patrons very seriously. The pits of most theatres were large and their bench seating could not be booked in advance" (102). They add that "West-End theatre managers, who had become since the 1850s increasingly dependent upon the patronage of visitors, quickly saw some of the advantages of transforming this space into a fashionable and expensive part of the theatre" (102). Reade's remarks concerning the probably limited run of *Ladies' Battle* under Webster at the Haymarket suggest that Reade and Mrs. Stirling worked out a private arrangement as she performed the play in Edinburgh for her benefit performances between 12 and 17 February 1852 (Allen 136).

From 20 November 1852 at the Haymarket Theatre, Fanny Stirling under Webster played the key role of the renowned actress Peg Woffington (1720?-1760) in Reade's first theatrical success, co-written with Tom Taylor, *Masks and Faces*. The play was a hit, running for 103 nights at the Haymarket and then the Adelphi (Parrish 175). Michael Hammet reports that "Taylor and Reade received £150 between them for it", and for Webster it was a "'gold mine' possessing 'the elements of eternal success'" (8). Reade capitalized on his play's success by turning it into his first novel, called *Peg Woffington*, published by Richard Bentley in 1853. In the period it was more usual for novels to become plays.

Fanny Stirling was unable to prevent his close relationship with yet another married actress, Laura Seymour (1820-1879), whom he began to live with around 1856 or shortly thereafter until her death in 1879, which left Reade bereft. Richard Fantina appositely comments that "she provided Reade with valuable advice on both his plays and novels, proving to be a supportive companion throughout the rest of his life" (182).

One of Reade's earliest known letters to Seymour, probably dating from June to August 1852, today in the collection of the Reade family held by Mrs. Juliet Noel (née Reade) — from the period prior to the Haymarket premier of *Masks and Faces* — throws considerable light upon the history of the play, Reade's perception of his collaboration with Taylor, Reade's state of mind at the time, his health and pre-performance activities, and the business of preparing a play for staging in the mid-Victorian theatre. Although there is mention of Webster, he is not the main focus of Reade's letter written from Claremont House, Malvern, where Reade had gone for hydropathic treatment, and addressed to "My dear Friend". Reade tells Laura Seymour

that "I am not to get Health", adding that "the weather will not give me a chance" and that "Dramatic annoyances have found me out even here". He continues by describing events as he sees them:

My collaborator Taylor has written a new denouement Epilogues & so on and without submitting it to me who have had plenty of cause to distrust his dramatic power & judgment — reads it to the Haymarket Co. — this has hurt my amour propre, and a nobler feeling of creative Paternity the end of a Play is all-important, and I feel Woffington who is entirely mine ought at least to have been subject to my brush to the last — am I right or wrong? —

Reade's concern with ownership and the issue of collaboration exhibit themselves in this paragraph in which he refers to his "amour propre". This refers to "a nobler feeling of creative Paternity" and total ownership of the play relating to *Masks and Faces*. Reade's transformation of his dramatic conceptions into his first novel *Peg Woffington* accords with his "vision of creativity" based upon "the presumption that most literary works could be first taken to bits, and that those bits could then be reused to create new literary works". Consequently, *Masks and Faces*, a dramatic work written in collaboration, is transformed into Reade's novel *Peg Woffington* (Macfarlane 138).

Reade then refers to his collaborator:

The best is T writes to me with smooth cool-ness that he is free from all egotism & simply has consulted our common Interest in an emergency — and so he has as far as money — which perhaps he thinks N° 1 — but as the thing is being worked I see reputation & consideration for him & neither for me. I wish you would give me a few paragraphs of your good sense on this subject and tell me whether I am well used or ill-used here. I feel ill-used, and have remonstrated firmly — but I expect to be told it is only my temper hasty by nature and embittered no doubt by the savage ingratitude of others — (Letter to Laura Seymour, June to August 1852).

These two paragraphs reveal Reade's scepticism, his lack of personal trust in his collaborator Tom Taylor, and his sarcasm found for instance in an expression such as "free from all egotism". They also indicate his trust in his correspondents' "good sense": Reade will become increasingly dependent upon Seymour. There is self-awareness too: recognition of a naturally hasty temper subject to flare ups and a tendency towards bitterness in his temperament already evident in the early days of his authorial career.

Reade then gives Seymour a detailed account of "the History of the Play":

I wrote a certain scene in which [the character of] Triplet whose broad outlines I then & there drew figured — and another personation scene containing Peg Woffington, Colley Cibber, James Quin — I showed these to Taylor as scenes. He liked these two characters and we agreed to write a comedy.

Reade is unclear as there are three Triplets in *Masks and Faces*: Triplet (acted by Webster), his ironically named son Lysimachus (in Greek history son of Alexander the Great), and Mrs. Triplet. He tells Seymour:

I began. I wrote the greater part of Act 1 containing the personation of a retired Actress to confound Cibber — and I sketched the situations of the second Act. viz. the company assembled in Mr Vane's House & Mrs Vane's sudden appearance — Mrs Vane's kindness to Triplet[,] [a] mere sketch — and in Triplet's House the first Picture scene almost as it stands now and the idea of a Second Picture scene which has been changed by me since — and I wrote a little of a third Act —

Reade's inspiration for *Masks and Faces* was the painting at the Garrick Club, which he frequented during the late 1840s, of the actress Peg Woffington (1720?-1760; see Cave). The painting fascinated him; he is remembered as saying "I am in love with Peg Woffington" (*Memoir* 194; [qtd. in] Fantina 181n30). Indeed, throughout his life he was obsessed with actresses, to take two obvious instances, Fanny Stirling and then Laura Seymour. Michael Hammet writes that "Just as the country gentleman, Ernest Vane, in *Masks and Faces* had gone to London and become enthralled by an actress, so Reade was deeply impressed by" for instance "Mrs. Stirling — enamoured of her ... Unlike Vane, however, Reade was not blown about by circumstances, but saw opportunity in his new acquaintance, and began to write plays" (27). Other theatrical figures who appear in *Masks and Faces* include Colley Cibber (1671-1857) the author, actor, and theatrical manager (Salmon) and the actor James Quin (1693-1766; see Thomson).

Reade then describes in some detail to Seymour his account of the collaborative process and Taylor's part in it:

Well Taylor came down to me added to my first act filled up the chinks — got Vane into a better position & made the first Act an Act. I think it lay idle six Months — he then went to work and treated the rest in the same way — so that

flatter Seymour by reminding her of the final resting place of great dramatists of the past such as John Dryden (1631-1700) and William Congreve (1670-1729) as well as actors and actresses such as David Garrick (1717-1779) and Anne Oldfield (1683-1730). In the final paragraph of this letter, Reade refers Seymour to his interest in the price of the fourth series of *Southey's Common Place Book* edited by Robert Southey's son-in-law John Wood Warter and published in London in 1851: an example of Reade's habit of accumulating source material that he wishes to "reuse" (Macfarlane 138). Reade's novel *Peg Woffington*, dedicated to Taylor and published less than a month following the opening of *Masks and Faces*, "dealt with the same subject and appropriated much of Taylor's dialogue without his permission" (Edwards). Clearly, Reade regarded the script of *Masks and Faces* as *his*, transforming it into fictional form: in his account of the writing of the fictional *Peg Woffington* in the *Memoir*, he wrote that the novel was finished whilst he was in Durham in August 1852 (Reade and Reade 54). His letter addressed to "My dear Friend" certainly supports the observations in the *Memoir* that Seymour acted as Reade's "literary and dramatic partner, and with her he discussed his plots, situations, and characters. To her criticism he submitted his dialogue. She possessed the faculty of perceiving at a glance how the lines would play and how each chapter would read" (Reade and Reade 242; Fantina 182n32).

Reade's letter also reveals his dissatisfaction with the collaborative process, yet Reade continued to collaborate with Webster and others. *Masks and Faces* was not the conclusion of Reade's dealings with the powerful Webster. Theatres at which Webster was the "sole proprietor and manager" continued to perform *Masks and Faces*—for instance at the Theatre Royal, New Adelphi February 1859 (Parrish 312)—and Webster performed the role of the violin player Triplet at the Theatre Royal, Marylebone, on 19 July 1855.

In the summer of 1867 "*Dora*: The new and original rustical and poetical Drama in Three Acts, by Charles Reade ... founded on the exquisite Poem by Alfred Tennyson" was performed "at the Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Kensington Park ... under the management of ... Benjamin Webster" (Parrish 336). The role of *Dora* was played by Kate Terry (1844-1924), the elder sister of Dame Ellen Terry (1847-1928). Kate Terry left the stage in 1867 to marry the then wealthy Arthur Lewes (see Pascoe 343). Reade more or less pleaded with Webster to produce the play at the Adelphi. Writing to Webster from 2 Albert Terrace, Knightsbridge London, where he had settled with Seymour, in a letter dated 11 April 1867, now at the Parrish Collection, Reade expressed his feeling that there are "only two men, who can play farmer Allen at all ...

[namely] Webster & Neville. Of these Webster is much the best. But Neville better than anyone else & Kate Terry the best *Dora* in England" (Letter to Benjamin Webster, 11 April 1867). Henry Gartside Neville (1837-1910) played the role of Allen (see Lawrence). Reade told Webster "you have tried Tom Taylor & lost money. Phillips & not made any. Give me my turn. But take another drama, if you don't like *Dora*". The reference to "Phillips" is probably to the dramatist Israel Watts Phillips (1825-1874; see Knight, "Phillips")—and Reade sent Webster a copy of the five act *The Double Marriage* "founded on [Auguste] Maquet's *Le Chateau Grantier* [which] was produced at the Queen's Theatre, October 24, 1867" (Parrish 196). In this 11 April letter, referring to *Dora*, Reade told Webster that the play was "greatly improved". Webster had not been well and was operating at a financial loss, so Reade displayed his business acumen by proposing that he and Webster "share the receipts after £65." Reade said that he would "pay £100 towards the expenses of getting the pieces together".

Writing from the Theatre Royal Newcastle on 24 April 1867, where his adaptation of his three-volume *Griffith Gaunt; Or, Jealousy* (1866) with its theme of adultery and bigamy was enjoying a successful run, in a letter now at the Folger Library, Reade tells Webster that "I am not unmindful of our long friendship, and, if I saw any reason that a play by Watts Phillips was more likely to draw than a play by Alfred Tennyson and Charles Reade, I would resign my claim on you" (Letter to Benjamin Webster, 24 April [1867]). However, Reade believes "just the contrary", telling Webster that Reade's "general experience, justifies" his advocacy for *Dora*'s production. Reade adds that he is "one of those writers, who fail in the manager's closet, but succeed with the Public". Reade instances the dramatization of *Griffith Gaunt*, reminding Webster that the managers were convinced that it would fail; however, it "is a great success, holds the vocal audience spellbound, and draws increasing receipts".

Choosing the right performers, the appropriate music and scenery was also important to Reade and displayed in his correspondence with Webster. He puts forward in this letter specific casting requests to Webster for *Dora*:

give me for Luke Blomfield a young man, who can show some feeling, Furtado for Mary Morrison, since there is an exquisite song; and lay out some money in three good scenes especially the last viz. the cornfield, & setting sun, and believe me Tennyson & Reade will carry you. If they don't — under the above conditions, I will take no money from you for the play. Can I say fairer than that?

Information on the actress Teresa Elizabeth Furtado (1845-1877) is sparse: she is not in the *ONDB*. According to the National Portrait Gallery website, she was "the daughter of a musician, Furtado was well-known as the heroine of various stage melodramas. Furtado married the actor John Clarke. Her premature death at the age of thirty-two resulted in Clarke's breakdown and death soon after" ("Teresa Elizabeth Furtado").

Five days later, on 29 April 1867, after he had returned from Newcastle to 2 Albert Terrace, Knightsbridge, Reade wrote in a letter now at Birmingham Reference Library once again to Webster concerning the appropriate performers, music, and scenery for the adaptation of *Dora*:

Furtado! I quite agree with you that her talent is not suited to the part of Mary Morrison.

I will explain to you why I mentioned her. There is an exquisite song to be sung in the second act, the words Tennyson's own, the music equal to the words. I had given the song to Mary Morrison. Looking therefore at your company I saw only Furtado and Louisa Moore (Letter to Webster, 29 April 1867).

Louisa Moore was a Victorian actress active at the Adelphi Theatre 1867-68. She played the boy Joseph who is brutally treated in the prison scene at the conclusion of Reade's dramatic adaptation from his novel *It's Never Too Late To Mend* (Hammet 14). Reade then tells Webster "If however Mrs. Billington would play the part, I could without impropriety give the song to Dora. Of course as to the acting Mrs. Billington is the person. She would have the breadth, the part, small as it requires, Billington as a matter of course would be the Luke Blomfield". Adeline Billington (1825-1917) and her husband John Billington (1830-1904) were both associated with Webster and the Adelphi Theatre (Dickens 102n; Pascoe 45-47).

Reade in this letter then turns to the subject of "Music", commenting that he "can have the assistance of Mrs. Tom Taylor in this department: I wish the business aided with sweet old rural strains appropriate to each occasion and of a nature to reach the heart instead of the unmeaning stuff the leaders compose for these things". Reade is referring to the wife of his former collaborator Tom Taylor who "married Laura Wilson Barker (d. 1905), the daughter of a Yorkshire clergyman, on 19 June 1855. She wrote music for Taylor's lyrics and plays, and composed her own orchestral works as well" (Howes).

Reade in his letter then turns to the topic of "Scenery", which in retrospect is to be the Achilles heel of the production. He tells Webster that

Nothing out of the way is required for the first act except a stage-cloth painted with skill & care. 2nd Act. nothing particular except the Brook. Is it any use my asking for real water [?] A very small quantity would do.

3 Act. Here we want a very superior stage cloth to give an idea of stubble. Standing corn on a slope well painted and the setting with streaky clouds that ought to change their forms slightly as the sun declines. This has been never done I fear; but it can be done, and, if it is done, will be a great element of success; because the lines cooperate with the pictorial effect:

Will you back me in these particulars? (Letter to Webster, 29 April 1867).

In a postscript, Reade rather unnecessarily reminds the experienced Webster that "It is not generally understood in theatre that pictorial effects are valuable in proportion as they enter into the story". Reade provides a rather elaborate detailed example:

Vining succeeded greatly with the fire in Streets of London: so he thought he had only to have a fire to succeed. But his Barnaby Rudge fire missed fire completely: and why? It was an irrelevant fire. Fire N^o 1 played its part in the plot. I ask for a gurgling brook in Act 2 because we sing Tennyson's song of the Brook in the presence of a dying man whose state accords with those immortal words. I ask for a great corn-field, because the full crop is supposed to open the inexorable farmer's heart, and I ask for a grand sunset, because that is a topic used with great effect in the dialogue. Thus pointed by the lines the pictorial effects will repay the outlay.

Reade's reference is to George J. Vining (1824-1875) the actor, manager: his most popular role was as Badger the detective in Dion Boucicault's *Streets of London* first performed in August 1863. Vining produced in October 1865 the dramatic adaptation of Reade's *It Is Never Too Late to Mend*, in which he played Tom Robinson (Reynolds). Vining and Watts Phillips put on the four-act, very badly received adaptation of Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* at the Princess's Theatre on 12 November 1866 (Shafto 165).

Webster and Reade settled quickly, with Reade agreeing to Webster's suggestion that Miss Hughes, a member of Webster's company, was ideal in the role of Mary Morrison. A rather obscure actress, according to the "Adelphi Theatre Calendar" a "Miss Hughes" performed at the Adelphi in 1866-1867, 1874, 1876, and 1877 (Nelson et al.). Reade was present for the opening night of *Dora* on 1 June 1867, and the correspondence between Reade and Webster provides evidence of the former's fascination and

preoccupation with the minutia of staging, casting, and actual performance details demonstrated by his wish to be present at rehearsals.

Dora received some praise. For instance, the reviewer in *The Illustrated London News* (22 Jun 1867) wrote that "The new drama of domestic life, composed by Mr. Charles Reade partly out of the story told in Mr. Tennyson's touching and beautiful poem of 'Dora,' continues to attract good audiences at the Adelphi Theatre". Attention is then drawn to

the scene in Farmer Allan's wheat field at sunset, in the last act, where Dora has put William Allan's child in the grandfather's way, in order that she may intercede with the stern old man on behalf of the widow the orphan boy. The part of Dora, as our readers may remember, is played by Miss Kate Terry; that of the farmer by Mr. H. Neville; and Miss Hughes plays that of Mary, who has married William Allan, to the displeasure of his father, instead of marrying his cousin Dora. The other man is Luke Blomfield, a personage not to be found in Tennyson's poem, but invented by Mr. Reade for the purpose of counselling Dora for her rejection by William thereby, in our judgment, destroying half the moral interest of the original story (630).

Another favourable response was from the journalist and examiner of plays William Bodham Donne (1807-1882; see Lindemann), who wrote to Reade on 20 June 1867 that "it is a great treat to see a play not only admirably acted, but also without any spice or element of for want of a better word, what is now called 'sensation' ". Donne told Reade that Reade had "studied a great Idyll—with the eye and mind of a poet and drawn out from behind his canvas the types which Tennyson must have had in his view when he conceived and constructed his picture" (Donne, Letter to Reade).

Donne and *The Illustrated London News* were in the minority, however. Although the play had played more or less regularly through June until 7 July and then on alternate nights until 19 July, it was taken off owing to hostile reviews. The reviewer in *The Athenaeum* (8 Jun. 1867:675) wrote that Tennyson's "*Dora* is so primitive and elementary, so pure and delicate in theme and characters" that it is almost impossible to translate into drama. Reade's three acts "exceed the means it possesses of sustaining the spectators interest". Furthermore, on the first night, the third act was "interrupted by laughter" from the audience. The reasons were connected to "some accidents associated with the scenery. The setting sun was awkwardly worked, and the few sheaves on the stage barely symbolize the abundant harvest described in the text". The reviewer added that he

thought "much of this might have been avoided, had Mr. Reade been more faithful to the poet and not have sought to make too real in the drama manners which in the poem are purely ideal; or not so recklessly added to the original incidents, which cover space without advancing the action".

A decade or so later, Reade planned to revive *Dora* and wrote an account of what had happened previously. Writing in a privately published pamphlet from 2 Albert Terrace, Knightsbridge on 1 September 1877 and published in February 1878, Reade's explanation reveals just how vulnerable performance and production were to human foible. Reade writes in his pamphlet *Dora, or The History of a Play* that he "felt so strongly in my actors that I was not much alarmed when I found the scene-painter was disorderly. Alas! I underrated the *destructive* powers of a drunkard and a fool!" Reade relates that the scene-painter's "cornfield was a shapeless mass, streaked with fiery red and yellow ochre. A cornfield! We might just as well call it the Red Sea ... we might have called it anything, for it represented nothing: it was what it was, an horizon-cloth primed with blood, and ochre, and drunken impudence". He elaborates:

the public stared with wonder at the unearthly phenomenon, wonder, but no displeasure; there was as yet no distinct ground for offense, since not a soul in front, except the poor author, could possibly divine what the monstrous thing was intended to libel. But this apathy ceased when Farmer Allen came on, and interpreted the daub.

"Dora, my girl, come to have a look at the wheat?"

Once informed that the splashes of blood and ochre on the cloth were wheat, every cockney, who had voyaged into the bowels of the land ... began to snigger. (qtd. in Parrish 224)

Reade's awareness of the importance of scenery is shown in his soliciting in his 1877 defence of *Dora* the assistance of the dramatist J. W. Pigott in order to enter restricted areas of Windsor Castle accompanied by Reade's chosen scene painter W. H. Hann to make him, as Reade wrote in a letter to Pigott on 8 May 1877 now at the Parrish Collection, "imitate nature" and to sketch "the noblest scene" he was capable of (Letter to J. W. Pigott). Pigott's *The Bookmaker* was performed at the Terry's Theatre in the Strand on 19 March 1889, and the Gaiety Theatre, 9 August 1890 and also his *Which wins?* 12 July 1889 (Nicoll 524). Reade described the scene designer and painter Walter H. Hann as a "good friend" (qtd. in Coleman 240). According to Alfred L. Nelson and his collaborators, Hann worked at the Adelphi Theatre from 1883-1885,

1890-1893, 1895-1897, and 1899. Incidentally, Reade does not appear to have discussed the matter with Tennyson. Webster by this time was too ill to care: he died in 1880.

Conclusion

In order to illuminate areas of Reade's dramatic activities, this article has drawn upon previously unpublished correspondence written by Charles Reade to the leading Victorian theatrical manager Benjamin Webster, to the actress Fanny Stirling with whom Reade was obsessed, also to another influential actress Laura Seymour with whom Reade became personally dependent, and to other correspondents. Today, if remembered at all, it is primarily as a novelist; Reade is however forgotten as a largely successful dramatist. The fact that he was a highly respected Victorian literary figure is justification in itself for examining his responses to collaboration, his very possessive attitude to his work, to originality, the inspiration behind his creativity, and his attempts to persuade powerful personalities in the Victorian theatre to stage his work. His letters throw light on his attitudes to composition, acting, music and scenery amongst other theatrical elements. His letters bear out the truth of Hammet's observations that "throughout his work for the theatre the character of the actress represented the character of woman ... it is not the woman that is important to Reade; it is the set of characteristics, the subtlety, the compassion, the adeptness at disguise and role transformation, and the sympathetic emotional power which was employed to win over the audience, and to persuade the plot to a satisfying conclusion" (36-37). To appropriate Fantina's words, Reade's "female characters stand at the forefront of the most vibrant women in Victorian literature": Reade's dramatic works as well as his novels powerfully depict "contestations over mores and power" (163-64).

Notes

¹ Thanks so are due to Caroline Radcliffe, Paul Lewis, Professor Patrick Scott, Maxwell Hoover and the anonymous readers of this article for their most helpful observations. Charles Reade's descendant Juliet Noel generously made his correspondence available and granted permission to use it. I am grateful to the following Archives, Libraries and their staff for permission to cite from their holdings: Birmingham Reference Library; the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC; The Parrish Collection, Princeton University library; and Special

Collections, UCLA. In the transcription of letters [] represent uncertain readings or material added by the present writer.

² For Henry Leigh Murray (1820-1870), who regularly performed with his wife Elizabeth Leigh Murray (1815-1892), under Webster, see Knight "Murray, Henry Leigh [real name Henry Leigh Wilson] (1820-1870)". For Fanny Stirling see Taylor, "Stirling [née Hehl], Mary Anne [Fanny] (1813-1895)," and Rinear.

Works Cited

- Allen, Percy. *The Stage Life of Mrs. Stirling*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1922.
- Baker, William, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, and Paul Lewis, editors. *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*. 4 vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005.
- Bancroft, Squire, and Marie Bancroft. *Mr and Mrs Bancroft On and Off the Stage*. 2 vols. London: Bentley, 1881.
- Bolton, H. Philip. *Dickens Dramatized*. Boston, Mass.: G. K. Hall, 1987.
- Bratton, Jacky editor. *Dickensian Dramas Plays from Charles Dickens*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017.
- Burns, Wayne. *Charles Reade: A Study in Victorian Authorship*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1961.
- Cave, Richard Allen. "Woffington, Margaret [Peg] (1720?-1760)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29820. Accessed 26 April 2020.
- Coleman, John. *Charles Reade: As I Knew Him*. London: Treherne, 1903.
- Davis, Jim, and Victor Emeljanow. "Victorian and Edwardian Audiences" in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*. Edited by Kerry Powell. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. 93-108.
- Davis, Tracy C. *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- "The Show Business Economy, and Its Discontents". *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*. Edited by Kerry Powell. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. 36-51.
- Dickens, Charles. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, edited by G. Storey, et al. vol. 12. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.
- Donne, W. B. Letter to Charles Reade, 20 June 1867. MS. Private Ownership. Mrs. Juliet Noel.
- Edwards, P. D. "Reade, Charles (1814-1884), Novelist and Playwright". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23224. Accessed 28 April 2020.
- Elwin, Malcolm. *Charles Reade*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1931.
- Fantina, Richard. *Victorian Sensational Fiction: The Daring Work of Charles Reade*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Fawkes, Richard. *Dion Boucicault: A Biography*. London: Quartet Books, 1979.
- Hammet, Michael. Introduction. *Plays by Charles Reade*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Howes, Craig. "Taylor, Tom (1817-1880)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27090. Accessed 28 April 2020.

- Knight, Joseph, revised by Nilanjana Benerji. "Murray, Henry Leigh [real name Henry Leigh Wilson] (1820–1870)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19612. Accessed 25 April 2020.
- Knight, Joseph, revised by Logan Delano Browning. "Phillips, (Israel) Watts (1825–1874)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22177. Accessed 29 April 2020.
- Knight, Joseph, revised by Jan McDonald. "Webster, Benjamin (1798–1882)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28941. Accessed 24 April 2020.
- Lawrence, W. J., revised by Nilanjana Banerji. "Neville, (Thomas) Henry Gartside (1837–1910)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35204. Accessed 29 April 2020.
- Lindemann, Ruth Burridge. "Donne, William Bodham (1807–1882)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7821. Accessed 30 April 2020.
- Macfarlane, Robert. *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.
- Maquet, Auguste, and Charles Reade. *The Double Marriage, A Drama in Five Acts*. London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1867.
- Nelson, Alfred L, Gilbert B. Cross, and Joseph Donohue. "Adelphi Theatre Calendar: A Record of Dramatic Performances of a Leading Victorian Theatre". U of Massachusetts, 2016, www.umass.edu/AdelphiTheatreCalendar. Accessed 30 April 2020.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. *A History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama 1850–1900*, II. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1949.
- Parrish, M. L., with the assistance of Elizabeth V. Miller. *Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade. First Editions Described with Notes*. London: Constable, 1940. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968.
- Pascoe, Charles E., editor. *Our Actors and Actresses. The Dramatic List. A Record of Performances of Living Actors and Actresses of the British Stage*. 2nd ed. revised and enlarged. [1890]. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969.
- Poovey, Mary. "Forgotten Writers, Neglected Histories: Charles Reade and the Nineteenth-Century Transformation of the British Literary Field". *ELH*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2004, pp. 433–53.
- Radcliffe, Caroline, editor. *Wilkie Collins "The Red Vial": A Drama in Three Acts*. London: Francis Boutle, 2017.
- Reade, Charles. *The Courier of Lyons; or The Attack Upon the Mail ... Translated from the French ...* London: Thomas Hailes [nd]
- *Dora: A Pastoral Poem in Three Acts. Founded on Mr. Tennyson's Poem*. London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1867.
- *Dora, or the History of a Play*. London: Williams and Strahan, [1878].
- *Griffith Gaunt; Or, Jealousy*. 3 vols., London: Chapman and Hall, 1866.
- *Hard Cash: A Matter of Fact Romance*. 3 vols. London: Sampson Low, and Marston, 1863.

- *It's Never Too Late To Mend: A Matter of Fact Romance*. 3 vols. London: Richard Bentley, 1856.
- *It Is Never Too Late To Mend: A Drama in Five Acts*. London: Williams and Strahan, 1872.
- Letter to Benjamin Webster. 11 April 1867. MS. Morris L Parrish Collection. Princeton University Lib., Princeton.
- Letter to Benjamin Webster. 24 April [1867]. MS. Folger Shakespeare Lib., Washington, DC. [ART Vol. b19, fol. 67]
- Letter to Benjamin Webster. 29 April 1867. MS. [Archival Collections] Birmingham Reference Lib., Birmingham.
- Letter to Benjamin Webster. November 1851. MS. Morris L Parrish Collection. Princeton University Lib., Princeton.
- Letter to Laura Seymour. June to August 1852. MS. Private Ownership. Mrs. Juliet Noel.
- Letter to J. W. Pigott. 8 May [1877]. MS. Morris L. Parrish Collection. Princeton University Lib., Princeton.
- Letter to Fanny Stirling. 2 November 1851. MS. Morris L Parrish Collection. Princeton University Lib., Princeton.
- *Peg Woffington: A Novel*. London: Richard Bentley, 1853.
- *A Terrible Temptation*. 3 vols., London: Chapman and Hall, 1871.
- *Trade Malice: A Personal Narrative; and The Wandering Heir: A Matter of Fact Romance*. London: Samuel French, 1875.
- *The Wandering Heir. A Matter of Fact Romance*. Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1872.
- *White Lies*. 3 vols., London: Trübner, 1857.
- *A Woman Hater*. 3 vols., Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1877.
- Reade, Charles, and Compton Reade, *Charles Reade, D.C.L., Dramatist, Novelist, Journalist: A Memoir. Compiled Chiefly from His Literary Remains*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1887.
- Reade, Charles, and Tom Taylor. *Masks and Faces: or Before and Behind the Curtain: A Comedy in Two Acts*. London: Richard Bentley, 1854.
- Reynolds, K.D. "Vining family (per. 1807–1915)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/53565. Accessed 28 April 2020.
- Rinear, David. "'To Submit and Patiently to Wait': The Career of Mrs. Stirling". *Theatre Survey*, vol. 35, no. 2, November 1994, pp. 57–75.
- Salmon, Eric. "Colley, Cibber (1671–1757)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2012, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5416. Accessed 28 April 2020.
- Shafto, Justin A. F. *Dickens and the Drama*. New York: Scribners, 1910.
- Smith, Elton E. *Charles Reade*. Boston: Twayne, 1976.
- Southey, Robert. *Southey's Common-Place Book Fourth Series*, edited by John Wood Warter. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1851.
- Taylor, C. M. P. "Stirling [née Hehl], Mary Anne [Fanny] (1813–1895)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26533. Accessed 25 April 2020.

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. *The Poems of Tennyson. Second Edition Incorporating the Trinity College Manuscripts*. Edited by Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1987.

"Teresa Elizabeth Furtado (Mrs John Clarke) (1845-1877), Actress". National Portrait Gallery, website. Accessed 29 April 2020.

Thomson, Peter. "Quin, James (1693-1766), actor". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22962. Accessed 28 April 2020.

Wheeler, Edward Jewett. "Is Ellen Terry a 'Superwoman'?" *Current Opinion*, vol. 43, 1907, pp. 314-18.

THE SCRAPBOOK AS AN ARCHIVE: COLLECTING AND CURATING IN THE KATE TERRY SCRAPBOOK

JULIA RANK

Julia Rank first encountered the Kate Terry Scrapbook held in the Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Collection when undertaking a MA in History of Design at the Royal College of Art, in which she specialised in the material culture of the performing arts. A version of this essay received the Gillian Naylor Award for object-based research. This is her first article.

Introduction

In Gabrielle Enthoven's acquisition notes for a scrapbook dedicated to the actress Kate Terry (1844-1924) the scrapbook is described as "a complete record of the life and career of Kate Terry".¹ This comment immediately raises the question of what it means for such a record to be considered 'complete'. The Kate Terry Scrapbook (KTS) contains artefacts dated 1854-1924 and encapsulates the way in which paper-based material remains can be organised and preserved as part of a memorialisation process in order to create a permanent filing cabinet or museum of sorts for ephemeral items that were not produced or intended to be kept indefinitely.²

A scrapbook is a blank book in which artefacts such as photographs, newspaper cuttings, and letters are pasted for posterity. As Ellen Garvey Gruber points out in her study of scrapbooks in American culture, scrapbooks often have an uncertain status in libraries and archives because "they are, well, scrappy ... bearing the visible, physical, gluey marks of that joining together" (210). In her study of the fan-created theatrical scrapbook collection held by Ohio State University, Sharon Marcus questions whether they are a "researcher's dream or librarian's nightmare" due to the way in which they are often in poor physical condition, the compiler's identity and motivation are often unknown, and many are filled with press cuttings that can be found elsewhere (283). Each individual scrapbook, however, results in a unique object and an expression of the compiler's theatregoing and aesthetic tastes.