

THE SOCIAL LIVES OF PLAYSSCRIPTS:
NICK OF THE WOODS FROM INKWELL TO INTERNET

by

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Abstract

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This study tracks the “lives” of playscripts as artifacts. Oriented by Book History or the Sociology of Texts (fused with media studies and cultural anthropology), I reconstruct the movements of a cohort of playscripts: nineteenth-century US and UK melodramas derived from Robert M. Bird’s 1837 novel, *Nick of the Woods*, and the twentieth-century parodies they spawned. The analysis is driven by questions about how theatre’s material texts move and change. What happens to playscripts as they cross media, cultural moment, and social sphere? What identities and values do playscripts emanate? How do their physical features reveal their passages? Chapter one, after clarifying the study’s multi-disciplinary ethos of material texts, narrates the cases’ condensed life story. Chapter two surveys the 1838-1858 playwrights in the US and UK, focusing on three whose varied careers, together with the cultural, economic, and semiotic operations of dramatizing, highlight some nuances of authorship and text during melodrama’s heyday. Chapter three moves backstage, delineating the material-semiotic practices involved in each type of theatre’s “workaday” script and its respective job: scribes and copies, prompters and promptbooks, actors and “parts,” and music. Chapter four enters the book world to describe the five publishers of *Nick of the Woods* plays, whose careers, processes, and products—especially the Acting Edition format—illustrate the industrial-era evolutions and varieties of English printed playbooks. Proceeding past the play’s successful stage career to the

twentieth century, chapter five discusses the playscript's relocation into libraries and special collections within the then-expanding learning sphere, along with their representation by new genres of lists. Chapter six considers modernized workaday scripts, now typewritten or published for amateurs, as they were configured for revival adaptations of outmoded melodrama for presentation along disparate channels: college, low-budget parody, radio, and England's public television. Reaching our scholarly realm, chapter seven narrates the advent of academic publishing in microform, print anthologies, digital products, and independent reprints, entwined with transformations in the US academy, through which old drama became data. Across its full arc, the life model demonstrates that the things people do with playscripts make the playscripts into different kinds of things.

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The Social Lives of Playscripts: *Nick of the Woods* from Inkwell to Internet

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Chapter One: Introduction:
Things to Do with Playscripts

After a half-century of starring in the same role, the aging actor Joseph Proctor autographed a playscript—the promptbook for a New York production of the play he was known for but no longer performing—either for a younger actor-manager, George Becks, or for another stage worker, George Boniface. The 1880s promptbook followed the format of its time, as a rather untidy fascicle fashioned from a printed playscript, one issued by the dominant play publisher, Samuel French; that printed booklet was interpolated with blank pages, bearing helter-skelter handwritten marks of assorted kinds, including three signatures. Its printed title page named the dead dramatist, Louisa H. Medina, an 1830s writer who specialized in dramatizing recent popular novels—in this instance, Robert M. Bird’s *Nick of the Woods*. That promptbook was thus a late-career copy of a play that had been reproduced countless times, first in handwriting, and later through three publishers’ printings. And Medina’s *Nick of the Woods* was just one dramatization amid a half-dozen versions by other writers in the US and UK. Those writers’ manuscripts are all lost, and few handwritten copies of any version endured—even Proctor’s half-century of stage copies disappeared. The 1880s actor-manager preserved the autographed promptbook among his own theatre memorabilia, which became the Becks bequest to the institution now known as the New York Public Library system. Decades later, a commercial publisher microfilmed that same promptbook and sold its miniature copies to dispersed libraries, even while the play itself no longer was produced on theatre stages.

This anecdote condenses the themes pursued in this dissertation: how do theatre’s material texts move and change? What identities and values do playscripts emanate? What

happens to playscripts as they cross media, cultural moment, and social sphere? The single New York promptbook bears traces of *practice*, of use and handling: the legacy of the playwright in the by-line, its backstage purpose evident in extensive prompt-marks, and its library location by the insignias of library processing. Physically, the book is an admixture of print and handwriting (as well as different types of paper). Textually, it bears layers of various kinds of codes or signs: dramatic text, publisher paratexts, print signatures, personal signatures, prompt markings, and library markings. In relation to textual reproduction, this specimen also represents both the large scale of commercial print publishing and the small-scale “manufacture” of theatre’s backstage copies, followed later by reproduction in the peculiar mode of microform (that is, commercial miniature reprinting for educational use). These documents manifest various values: use value (for prompters), financial exchange value (for publishers), sentimental value (in the star’s autograph), and symbolic value (in the commitment to preserve it). Each of those values is gauged by the register of a separate social sphere—theatre, publishing, and institutions of learning. The promptbook’s traces stretch from Louisa Medina’s 1838 writing, through a stage career, and up to early twenty-first century academic research. Those transmutations happened to other copies of Medina’s play, and to other plays like it.

This study centers on where a playscript went, how it was handled and transformed, for what purposes it was used, and what meanings or values it emanated. My method, or in humbler terms procedure, was to track the full trajectory, here called a “life,” of a small cluster of plays all based on the same story, Robert Montgomery Bird’s 1837 novel *Nick of the Woods*. Tracking the “life” meant following scripts as they traveled through multiple copies, several phases, different social spheres, distinct media, and successive eras, up to the present. In a word, the study watches the *playscript* instead of the play. The core question, simply put, is not *what does*

drama reveal? but rather, *what do playbooks reveal?* While drama studies usually cast the limelight on the textual *content*, in the larger, historical, social world, what is *in* the play matters in different ways in varying moments—and sometimes it matters not at all. Often, the play’s significance derives from *groupings* (as in publisher inventory) or even sets of mixed objects (as in theatre exhibits). The *playbook*, meanwhile, emanates other, non-literary significances to its practical handlers—and also to contemporary scholars—significances that also merit attention.

Why track a playscript’s life? Viewing the playscript as a thing, or cultural artifact maneuvered through social practices, opens up new observations about plays, documents, and modes of handling them not only in the sphere of theatre, but well beyond it. Through these observations, the dissertation points towards larger questions about the relationship between material and culture, the interaction of culture and knowledge (or information), the agency of workers, and the multiple mediations of textual reproduction, technology, and institutional practices. Also, foregrounding material and social phenomena around the document helps fill in gaps in our understanding of these contexts, or sometimes merely delineates those gaps, when the playscripts moved into arenas that have not drawn much attention. Covering eighteen decades, moreover, the biography of playscripts works toward a *continuous* history of theatre and material texts, linking the periods often divided by scholarly specialization from the 1830s to the 2010s, a span from “inkwell to Internet,” as my sub-title names it. Because the scripts crossed not only time but spheres, the “life” method reveals the ways theatre articulates with distinct social spheres, rather than studying one sphere in isolation. This study thereby crosses the respective fields that examine those spheres (studies of theatre, books, institutions, and media), an interdisciplinary approach that responds to the flows of the object itself, as much as to currents in academic theory.

Why *Nick of the Woods*? The case supplies what actors call a through-line to my analysis of the lives of playscripts in general. Dramatized from Bird's novel, *Nick of the Woods* was popular on stage in both the US and the UK, appearing for about a half-century in both places during the theatrical era of spectacle melodrama. The "lives" of my title refer to not one, but multiple versions based on the same story, a multiplicity that better reflects the complicated stemma of dramatizations in the era, and that elides any attempt to reduce *Nick* to a single, cogent narrative. The case does offer a few historically significant features, particularly three: it emerged from early post-colonial cultural development in the US; the plays and novel together helped propagate negative images of Native Americans; and one playwright was a rare woman professional dramatist. Notwithstanding these notable features, though, my selection of *Nick* is largely heuristic, and perhaps sometimes generic. This dissertation neither recuperates the play nor advocates its cultural importance. Hence the relation of the case to the method needs clarifying up front: in many studies of plays, scholars narrate a brief life of the text as just a small part of their analysis of the drama (or their new edition);¹ here, I refer to the particular drama as just a part of the life of the documents. The case of these plays speaks for playscripts more generally, especially melodramas originating in the industrial era.

The scope of the script's life is closely related to the scope of the play's stage career, though they are separable. Geographically, *Nick's* pathway covered an enormous reach within the Anglo world: the expanding US, including new Western territories, and the UK and British Empire, even to the antipodes. Language, not states, steered its course. Yet from the perspective of the *material* text, region matters less than it would for other themes (such as transmission public reception), since theatre and textual culture travelled fairly freely across borders,

¹ E.g., Barrett H. Clark, introduction to *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), xv-xvii. Clark retraces *Count of Monte Cristo* playscripts down to his own copy.

especially with innovations in technology enabling travel and communications. Still, regions and nation-states did bear on the course of scripts over space and time, most directly in the form of copyright, censorship, and postal policies, yet also in indirect ways, as geopolitics affected humanities studies. Temporally, the playscripts' trajectories span from 1838, the rag-paper beginnings, to the early twenty-first century, our own computer-screen era—well beyond the plays' stage heyday. The chronological passages of scripts does not align with—and are not explained by—standard historical markers, whether political (Jacksonian), aesthetic (Modernism), or calendar (twentieth century).² The closer fit could come from phases of textual technology (inkwell, stereotype, typewriter, microform), though these too run the risk of misrepresenting the phenomena, which often mixed media in messy combinations. Another way to describe movement is more schematically in terms of social sectors, or fields; scripts crossed the autonomous worlds of theatre, print, and institutions of learning, each variegated in itself (as amateur theatre differs from commercial theatre) and all interrelated (as promptbooks moved into libraries). In yet larger terms, *Nick* moved across two general realms: from the production of *culture* to the production of *knowledge*, albeit with much coinciding, overlap, and interconnections between them. To disentangle these complex movements, the individual chapters each zoom in on these interactions of media, sphere, and practice in one phase of the scripts' life in a delimited era: in the nineteenth century, ink-and-paper playwriting, backstage handling, and publishing; in the twentieth century, playbooks in institutions of learning and revival productions; and spanning late twentieth to early twenty-first centuries, scholarly publishing in old and new forms. I will explain those phases and chapters in more detail, below.

² For criticism of historian periodization related to books, see Meredith L. McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 14; for one related to theatre, see Bruce McConachie, "Theatre History and the Nation-State," *Theatre Research International* 20, no. 2 (1995): 141-50, Literature Resource Center, doi: 10.1017/S0307883300008385.

Nick of the Woods, 1837 to 2012

Because I invoke the *Nick* story in the service of the life analysis, it will help readers to understand its main features. Set in post-revolution Kentucky, Bird's novel entwines two arcs. In one, upper-class fiancés (who are also cousins) travel to settle in a frontier region, where white settlers are fighting Indians. Years before, the couple had been robbed of their property inheritance by an evil white man, Braxley; to wreak more maleficence, that villain now conspires with the lesser-evil Abel Doe, a white "renegade" who opted to live among Indians. Doe brokers with the savage Indian Chief, Wenonga, to abduct the migrating fiancé, Edith, to supply the villain's lustful desires, which will require killing her beloved cousin, Roland—both misdeeds almost accomplished. Along the second arc, a supposedly half-mad Quaker, Nathan, whose family had been massacred by the evil chief Wenonga years before, shape-shifts into the mysterious Indian-killer dubbed Jibbenainosay or "Nick of the Woods" (though his double-identity is revealed only later). The renegade Doe's virtuous yet troubled daughter, Telie, and a colorful woodsman Ralph Stackpole (good but for a habit of stealing horses) assist the couple, while a Negro "servant" and a feckless Yankee peddler provide comic relief, but little aid. In a climactic battle, Indians are summarily slaughtered, Nathan avenged, and the couple re-united, with a postscript articulating every character's later fate.

It hardly needs expositing that *Nick's* portrait of exotic Indian culture, half-century history of the country's frontier, and robust physical action were appealing to mainstream readers and audiences, if perhaps a bit differently in the US from the UK. Nathan/Nick was a fascinating split-persona invention; Ralph's backwoods idiom was amusing; the plot supplied a rushing cascade of high-stakes predicaments. Dramatizations translated those qualities for stage. All of them, for example, reproduced the same phrases of the woodsman Ralph: his portmanteau

“splendiferous Madame,” and his animal holler, “cock-a-doodle-doo!” The story’s general good/evil schema also recurred across all versions: Nathan kills Wenonga, all Indians die, and the couple is reunited (until a 1960 parody deconstructed the tropes). Yet other central features varied widely across the extant versions, as dramatizing and theatricality *per force* transmogrified the source work. The New Orleans version was the most trigger-happy presentation, while it also preserved Bird’s general disinterest in women’s active agency and dispensed with the Negro role. Medina’s New York version excised the Yankee peddler, projected a flaming canoe down a waterfall, and ennobled Telie by having her die sacrificially for unrequited love. The first British version enhanced women’s roles further, remodeling the finale so that Telie turns out to be Nathan’s long-lost daughter. At the level of national context, British versions foregrounded the romantic hero’s past as a Revolutionary military officer while US versions obscured that anti-colonial war. In an 1840 English version Ralph rescued Edith; in 1848 Nathan did that service, and the peddler—who usually receded or disappeared—actually peddled goods, while flirting with frontier women. The 1858 version, performed largely on horseback, gave a heroic role to Nathan’s dog, and cut the dialogue almost by half. Any one version, moreover, conveyed different meanings when it was staged differently—as when a girl cross-dressed as a settler boy, when a star tragedienne played Telie, or when real Indians appeared in a war-dance scene (replacing whites in “red-face” impersonation). And these qualities underwent deeper shifts in twentieth century parodies. The variety illustrates what some book historians, notably Roger Chartier, call a “fluidity” and “mobility” of texts, rejecting the idea of an essential or fixed version.³ The case of *Nick*, where the core bigotry persists across otherwise different variations, suggests that in one text some parts are more fluid than others, or in other words that text is like “slurry” (to borrow paper-making’s soupy mix), between fixed

³ Chartier, *Publishing Drama in Early Modern Europe*, Panizzi Lectures (London: British Library, 1999), 68.

and fluid. Such textual and material diversity undercuts any argument for *one* fixed meaning of *Nick* on stage, a point worth emphasizing when the presumption of single meaning persists even in recent studies of nineteenth-century plays.⁴

The Playscript as Phenomenon

Alongside the ideas arising from the case of *Nick* and from the life of a text method, the dissertation demonstrates that playscripts, even from eras of shoddy publishing and unredeemable sub-genres, lend themselves to historical and sociological enquiry. The playscript, as a material thing moving about society, is a complex, intriguing phenomenon, even apart from whatever dramatic text it bears. It hinges the world of theatre and the world of text, or play as artistic practice and play as document and literature. Playscripts run the spectrum from a disposable practicality to a precious heirloom. Most scripts have this dual quality of being now useful (for theatre production) and now literary; or now belonging to the realm of functional things, and now to the realm of leisure entertainment or textual scholarship, a taxonomic mobility that French scholar Jean-Marie Thomasseau calls their “bipolarity.”⁵ Scripts are in some ways like books (and sometimes called *book*), but in other ways like lower grades of texts (for example, mnemonic devices), or even sometimes akin to non-textual things (costumes). Their instrumental quality arises in a social setting, the backstage or rehearsal, so the playscript is part of a collectivity or group interaction in a literal sense. Recent humanities scholarship has sought a social quality often in a metaphoric or imaginative sense in relation to texts (such as novels) that people more often used in solitude. These playscripts undergo what social scientists call *social lives*. Playscripts are subject to drastic transformations across multiple persons—with each

⁴ I discuss cultural studies/English literature analyses of *Nick* in chap. 2.

⁵ Jean-Marie Thomasseau, “Toward a Genetic Understanding of Non-Contemporary Theatre: Traces, Objects, Methods,” *Theatre Research International*, 33, no. 3 (Oct, 2008): 235.

stage production cutting, adding, or revising—to degrees qualitatively and quantitatively greater than the author and publisher sequence of most literary production. In other words, the features that much recent scholarship seeks in other genres—sociality, producing meaning, transformation, multiple identities, and movement—appear readily in the phenomenon of the playscript.

Playscripts are also pertinent to studies of media, though in ways not broadly recognized. First, they are constituted by their own medium, *textual* ingredients and practices (pens, paper and page layout), which draw from the textual culture of the larger society yet refract common practices for the particular context of theatre. Because that materiality is shared across society, and not distinct to theatre, it becomes less notable in theatre studies, which usually emphasizes the medium of the final presentation encountered by audiences, the stage show. Second, the playscript is the textual *means of production* for much entertainment media, not only theatre, but film, radio, and television.⁶ As a behind-the-scenes document (in the literal sense), scripts are analogous to means of production text in other realms of performance, such as politics and sports, as well as more distant arenas, such as business offices. Also, while the *playtext* is “remediated”⁷ into theatre or film—a process often addressed in scholarship and journalist reviews—its *script* has less noticeably been remediated into new *textual* media, as in digital versions of plays, and also microform, as well as formats like anthologies. This attention to *means of production* media and their fates after their commercial career differs from, but also complements, the more typical orientation of media studies, which focuses on the end-product—the broadcast show—and audience reception. This study of the playscript joins recent material-text studies that historicize

⁶ Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2006). What I call means of production documents belong to the larger set Gitelman calls the “protocols” of a medium.

⁷ Jay D. Bolter and Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999). The concept “remediated” arose in such discussions of digital media.

media, thereby perpetuating the term's original denotation as *any* material means of communication, alongside mass communications media.⁸ This study speaks to media studies in a third way: because a play's content contributes to the circulation of images and ideology, the movements and makings of the material playscript form part of the behind-the-scenes production of culture, crucial to the distribution of ideas. The story-line dramatized in the plays I discuss here, variations of *Nick of the Woods*, are inexorably racist, foremost against the ethnic group called Indians (when not called "red niggers"), while it also rehashes categories of gender, class, and region that disturb to my political-ethical orientations. I do use the term Indians as my subjects did. While not focused directly on the ideological effects of *Nick's* story, still, I work under an awareness of the propaganda function of the story—its buttressing of quasi-genocidal, Manifest Destiny ideologies. By describing the movements of material texts, this analysis aims to fill in pieces in the studies of the circulation of cultural and political concepts.

Things to Do with Playscripts

In general, this dissertation considers other things to do with playscripts. By this I mean first, what people have done with playscripts in the past, and second, what we, as scholars, do with them. *Doing* includes reading, but in the lives of these documents, reading involves a range of modes, besides reading attentively, such as when actors memorize, scribes see the phrases they copy, or librarians scan title pages for cataloguing. Doing also includes activities besides reading, that is, ways of *handling* plays: prompters gluing in blank pages, touring companies porting, publishers stocking, mail services delivering, collectors buying, librarians shelving. (People also *trash* playbooks, though my research uncovered little about that ultimate passage.) The mode of handling correlates to the social position, or jobs, of the handlers, and to particular

⁸ E.g., Sandra M. Gustafson, "The Emerging Media of Early America," in *Cultural Narratives: Textuality and Performance in American Culture before 1900*, ed. Sandra M. Gustafson and Caroline F. Sloat (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

ways of making marks on the script. It is also enmeshed in a particular site, which is animated by a distinct culture. These melodrama scripts moved through several sites: theatre's backstage, print-shops and publisher offices, book stores, libraries, and college classrooms. In institutions of learning, the scripts are copied and read for different purposes, by different practices. Whence the crux of this study: the things people do with playscripts make the playscripts into different kinds of things. These trajectories of social material practices invite other ways of thinking about plays, and hence theatre, or cultural production more generally, within the larger society.

Past Scholarship

In order to analyze the lives of playscripts, most of my methods carried me outside of theatre studies itself, although that field informed my understanding of playwriting and backstage work in the nineteenth century (and partly of productions in the twentieth century). My research covered an archipelago of fields, each offering insights, yet none providing a home base, as this survey should explain. The material text emphasis of the project does complement literary analysis, while it also challenges some persistent assumptions about the agency of authors and publishers, or the transmission of meaning to audiences. My approach also coincides momentarily with a page-to-stage analysis, while departing from that method's emphasis on how the dramatic text is transformed by artists—the director (especially) and actors—toward the telos of theatrical presentation. Page-to-stage methods provide us with useful specimens of promptbooks as well as analyses of cases, though almost always of important works.⁹ Theoretically, contemplations of the path from page to stage have raised provocative questions about the relationship between reading and watching drama and between the two kinds of artistic work—is the script a blue-print for the performance, or a distinct “performance,” or are they

⁹ Charles Macready and William Shakespeare, *Mr. Macready Produces “As You Like It”: A Prompt-book Study*, ed. Charles H. Shattuck (Urbana, IL: Beta Phi Mu, 1962).

different “texts” altogether?¹⁰ For my purposes, though, this approach bypasses the workings of scripts *during* the show or their travels afterward. Apart from some studies in the French field of Theatre Genetics, the playscript itself usually recedes from these analyses, as scholars examine artistic intention, final presentation, and audience reception. For most studies of theatre, the script as a material thing becomes invisible, as indeed it almost always has been for audiences. The “mass of play-goers,” as one 1850s acting manual put it, “think very little about the cause, all they want is the effect.”¹¹ This study considers those causes and effects from a different angle.

Watching the playscript across its life has required other methods besides textual analysis. Finding no ready-made model, I assembled a kaleidoscope from rather disparate fields, encompassing sundry methods and case studies. For understanding the playscript as a physical text, the best formulations come from Book History, an interdisciplinary field overlapping, or sometimes called, sociology of texts, material textuality, or print culture studies. The field encompasses a diverse range of emphases and methods, spanning from the more factual to the more sociological or theoretical, and covering the gamut of literary genres and document types—in tandem with debates about what even counts as *book*, and what constitutes a *text* or *work*. A few features unite these diverse strands of thought. Foremost is the recognition that the material form and the economics of textual production and reproduction are important in history and society. For Donald McKenzie, as for many in the field, books reveal facets of society and culture.¹² William St. Clair, for example, centers his study of “Romantic” era books on the “cabal” of publishers, or stationers, who in collusion with state and church, exerted control

¹⁰ Scholars articulate the page/stage relationship in sundry ways: as part of the flux of theatre process, Jean Alter, *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); as incommensurable entities, David Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); as separate performances, W. B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), *inter alia*.

¹¹ *The Amateur, or, Guide to the Stage* (Philadelphia: Fisher & Brother, n.d.), 33, New York Public Library.

¹² Donald F. McKenzie, “History of the Book,” in *The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography*, ed. Peter H. Davison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 28.

through quasi-monopoly and pricing schemes that kept innovative literature out of the hands of the large majority of English people. St. Clair's political economy analysis undercuts the standard literary history, or "parade" of books narrative, that conflates a book's printing with its public reach and social influence.¹³ In method, also, the Book History analysis often attends to *paratexts*, the sundry matter that surrounds the main text, which Gérard Genette describes in elaborate, historical taxonomy in his landmark *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, albeit mainly for other kinds of books.¹⁴ For the case of playscripts, the paratexts include special theatre components, such as dramatis personae lists, which have not drawn the same systematic scrutiny. I extend this analysis of less-noted elements to dramatic *format*, the elements such as stage directions and character labels that are particular to the genre of drama, that refer to the means of producing the show (such as actors' entrances, sound effects and the lowering of curtains), and that do so largely by visual rather than linguistic means, such as punctuation and line position. Except for one wave of attention in the heyday of semiotics, drama format remains one of the more neglected pieces of theatre apparatus.¹⁵

The field of Book History extends into a nexus of book-related fields, including descriptive and analytic Bibliography, from which I have also drawn. Bibliography has long welcomed studies of drama, though mainly of cases from the Early Modern era, exemplified in W. W. Greg's 1930s descriptive analysis of Elizabethan backstage documents.¹⁶ Greg's era of bibliography, vestigially called "New Bibliography," was oriented toward excavating a pure "Ur" master text or "continuous copy" (a manuscript to print pathway), a mission that later drew

¹³ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation and the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Elaine Aston and George Savona, *Theatre as Sign System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁶ W. W. Greg, *Stage Plots, Actors' Parts, Prompt Books*, vol. 1 of *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (1931; reprint. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

extensive, and convincing, criticism. Still, scholars continue to use bibliography methods detached from those early presumptions, as does Tiffany Stern in her survey of Renaissance theatre documents.¹⁷ Bibliographic methods have been marshaled less often for nineteenth-century drama, however, given the prevailing orientation toward quality book-making and quality literature—a status never reached by *Nick of the Woods*. Some lower-grade dramas receive notice because of their association with canon works, as in Patsy Stoneman’s critical edition of plays based on Charlotte Brönte’s *Jane Eyre*.¹⁸ But plays of unredeemable aesthetic quality, and dramatizations of minor novels, have drawn little bibliographic attention.

Other sources of writing about book production come from fields tangential to academic scholarship. Librarians’ practical discussions enlightened my understanding of twentieth-century institutional processes around playscripts. The rare books trade, notwithstanding fundamental differences of approach, often overlaps bibliography, library collecting, and scholarship.¹⁹ I have also tapped into the “trade” histories of printing or publishing, which center on technology or individuals, usually in ways untroubled by theoretical or historiographical concerns, yet still supplying useful information. The histories of separate materials—ink, paper, writing implements—have rarely been addressed by cultural scholars or social historians, but rather come from “buffs,” production trades, preservation workers, and technological history.

Where is theatre in book history, or vice-versa? There is some of each in the other, although only partially. Drama histories favor the Early Modern period, extending through the Restoration (which offers more women authors); they then leap forward to Modernism—skipping the industrial era, and hence bypassing melodrama. When scholars examine material

¹⁷ Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁸ Patsy Stoneman, *“Jane Eyre” on Stage: 1848 -1898: an Illustrated Edition of Eight Plays* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007). Thanks to Prof. Judith Milhous for bringing the book to my attention.

¹⁹ E.g., Madeleine Sterne, *Books and Book People in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Bowker, 1978). The author was a rare/antiquarian book dealer who wrote about both the subject—books and publishing—and her trade.

texts in the nineteenth-century, they have tended toward *other genres* besides drama; when nineteenth-century drama has been studied, it has been examined *as text*, rather than as material document. The playscript is absent from key reference texts in both Book History and Theatre Studies; in simple terms, “playscript” is not represented in indexes or separate entries. Still, there are several important forays into theatre-book history. Besides bibliography, English Literature has generated the most studies of drama as material text, especially for the Renaissance, in studies often centered on topics related to authorship and publishing, strong samples of which are bundled in the landmark anthology, *Re-Reading the Renaissance*.²⁰ In her first chapter of *Theatre of The Book*, Julie Stone Peters historicizes the script by dating its solidification to the Early Modern era, and then moves on to tangential genres of texts (such as acting manuals).²¹ Starting from the end of Peters’ scope, theatre scholar W. B. Worthen begins his *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* with G. B. Shaw’s fastidious page design in the late nineteenth-century, before visiting later episodes; as his title suggests, Worthen’s approach emphasizes the politics and visual “poetics” of the page,²² more its than materiality and economics. The French school of Genetics of Performance, focusing on the “genealogy of preparation” behind a production, often attends to material elements of documents, occasionally for “non-contemporary” instances, though more often for modern cases and by a page-to-stage methodology.²³ To fill in the nineteenth-century gap in Anglo cases, I drew from studies of other genres, such as topics

²⁰ John D. Cox and David S. Kastan, ed., *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

²¹ Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²² Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Drama*, chap. 1.

²³ Josette Féral, “Introduction: Toward a Genetic Study of Performance – Take 2,” *Theatre Research International* 33, no. 3 (October, 2008): 223–233.

represented in *The Industrial Book 1840-1880*, a volume in the *A History of the Book in America* set, and a host of cultural-material analyses of fiction.²⁴

One kind of study influencing my approach is the analytic case centered on *one* drama over its variations and transformations. Several of these delimit a narrow era, rather than a long unfolding. Roger Chartier compared the presentation of Molière's *George Dandin* across several appearances—a court performance, a semi-public staging, and bootleg provincial printing; the contrasts between them illustrate the fluidity of the text, among other concepts.²⁵ Barbara Mowatt reconstructs litigation around early productions of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, an episode that complicates Bibliography's "continuous copy" model of theatre-to-print trajectories.²⁶ For the modern era, one scholar tracks the unhappy collaboration of Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes on *Mule Bone* that spurred posthumous complications; another scholar disentangles the prolific variations of Tom Stoppard's *Night and Day* across two nations, through rehearsals and separate stagings, from typescript to multiple publishers' several editions.²⁷ In the middle-brow cultural zone, Philip Beidler reconstructs the transmogrification of the Broadway musical *South Pacific* from manuscript, to the back-and-forth between stage, film, and musical

²⁴ *The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship, vol. 3 of *A History of the Book in America*, ed. David D. Hall (Chapel Hill: American Antiquarian Society and University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For material cultural analyses of fiction, see Michael Denning, *Mechanical Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in America* (London: Verso, 1982); and Susan Williams, "Manufacturing Intellectual Equipment: The Tauchnitz Edition of 'The Marble Faun,'" in *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America*, ed. Michael Moylan and Lane Stiles (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985).

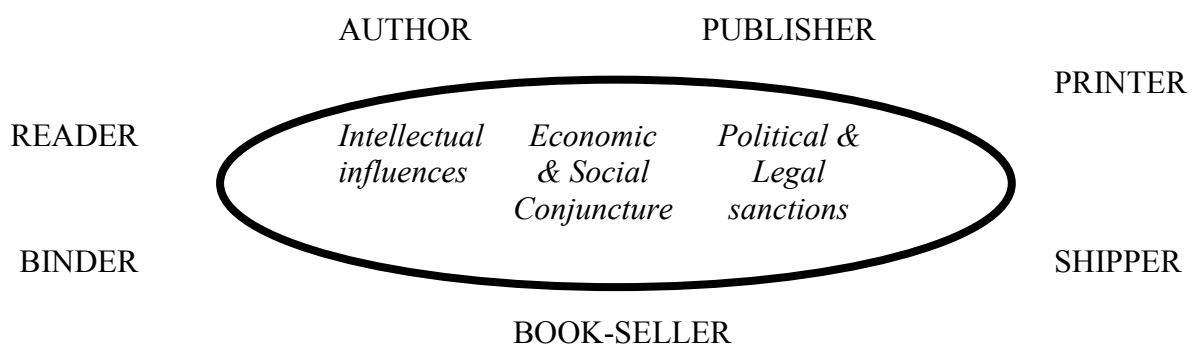
²⁵ Chartier, "From Court Festivity to City Spectators," in *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); see also, Chartier, *Publishing Drama*.

²⁶ Barbara A. Mowatt, "The Theatre and Literary Culture," in Cox and Kastan, *Early English Drama*, chap. 12.

²⁷ George Bornstein, "Afro-Celtic Connections: Hybridity and the Material Text," in *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Philip Gaskell, "Night and Day: Development of a Play Text," in *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

recording, though centered on end-product media, not the backstage material texts.²⁸ The Early Modern specialist, David Kastan, covers the longest historical span in *Shakespeare and the Book*, which traverses a series of discrete moments from folio, to Bowdler’s sanitized edition, to digital possibilities (which he views optimistically).²⁹ These scholars’ methods and insights inform my work, demonstrating the cogency of a single case, for instance, and the ways a work shifts significance as it crosses medium and format. Yet the particular era and qualities of a case do bear on our methods and concepts. Just as the stemma analysis of ancient documents is not wholly suitable to later cases, according to Jerome McGann’s assessment of critical editing practices,³⁰ so to the lives of Shakespeare plays, and of consecrated works in general, do not readily translate to cases of lower-status drama. Moreover, all of these studies, as they foreground single and often distinct cases, are less concerned with articulating replicable models.

Book history does offer a touchstone model. In a landmark article, “What is the History of Books,” cultural scholar Robert Darnton laid out a diagram schema, or “communications circuit,” to help clarify what he saw as a confusing “crisscrossing of disciplines”³¹ in book history. I approximate his model here:



²⁸ Philip D. Beidler, “*South Pacific* and American Remembering; or, ‘Josh, We’re Going to Buy This Son of a Bitch!’” *Journal of American Studies* 27, no. 2 (August 1993): 207-222.- 222

²⁹ Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁰ Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992).

³¹ Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?” in *Kiss of the Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990, 107-135), quotation, 110; figure, 112.

The flow of books passes through agents of book production: publisher, printer, carters, binders, sellers, and groups like libraries, as well as the shadow circuit of illegitimate figures, pirate or bootlegger. While some scholars have added segments to the circuit, in a kind of check-list,³² a more critical response is voiced by Thomas Adams and Nicolas Barker from *Bibliography* (one instance of the tension between bibliography and cultural studies within Book History). Adams and Barker invert the structure of the communications circuit in two strokes. Rather than the orbit of books moving *around* social forces (as if separate), they reposition social forces, or “zones of influence,” in the model’s corners, meaning that books circulate *within* social structures.³³ Second, they shift Darnton’s emphasis on people, or roles, to the book itself—recasting a circuit of *communications* into a circuit of *books*. The nodes are not humans, but material events. Thus Darnton’s *publisher* becomes Barker and Adams’ *manufacture*. I aim to finesse a compromise between Darnton’s human-centered and Barker and Adam’s book-event-centered models, by emphasizing social *practice*: playscripts were handled—written, reproduced, marked, or used—according to conventions of a particular trade community in theatre and print worlds.³⁴ Both models guide my history of playscripts, although both also need re-routing through theatre, a sphere that adds new figures—actor, prompter, director, or musical conductor—and involves distinct transformations, such as the promptbook and hand-copied actors’ parts. The relationship between author (playwright), and publisher or public defies simple schemas, given the variety of possible positions of writing—staff writer, freelancer, dead writer, or actor-writer. The playwright’s job changes over time and of course is colored by gender and

³² For one iteration of agents, see John Feather, “The Commerce of Letters: the Study of the Eighteenth-Century Book Trade,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1984): 405-424.

³³ Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, “A New Model for the Study of the Book,” in *Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, Clark Lectures (London: British Library, 1993).

³⁴ My orientation aligns with the vision summarized in Carl F. Kaestle and Janice Radway, ed., *Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940*, vol. 4 in *A History of the Book in America*, ed. David D. Hall (Chapel Hill: American Antiquarian Society and University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3.

other factors (a complexity I describe in chapter two). The playscript moves across theatre productions and publication—and these intersect, when publishers buy manuscripts from theatres, and theatres buy published scripts. These amendments help adapt the book circuit, without rejecting it as a heuristic model.

Yet Book History does not always speak to certain larger social themes that seemed pertinent to my study. For models of “lives of things” in relation to social practices, and for a larger vision of cultural context, I turned to the social sciences—to cultural or economic anthropology in particular—where ethnography has long addressed material culture in terms of social practice and significance. The title of one anthropology anthology coins the phrase “socialness of things,” recognizing “the integration of objects in the social fabric of everyday life.”³⁵ Adopting this outlook, my study considers the *socialness of playscripts*. In a 1986 anthology *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff urged social scientists to track the “life,” or narrate the biography, of artifacts.³⁶ The biography model has influenced a generation of social sciences, especially in ethnography and material cultural studies.³⁷ One literary counterpart is Cathy Davison’s analysis of the material “morphology” and reception of the early nineteenth-century novel, *Charlotte Temple*,³⁸ though the thing-biography approach has yet to pervade Book History or Theatre Studies. The lag bespeaks a gap between cultural anthropology—studying *culture* in the daily life sense—and studies of *culture* as special effects (books or theatre). That distinction is blurred by certain strands of Performance Studies, though

³⁵ Stephen H. Riggins, ed., introduction to *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 1.

³⁶ Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³⁷ For a survey of biography-of-thing approaches, see Janet Hoskins, “Agency, Biography, and Objects,” in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (London: Sage, 2006), 74-84.

³⁸ Cathy N. Davidson, “The Life and Times of *Charlotte Temple*: the Biography of a Book,” in *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), chap. 6.

not in ways germane to my approach. While articulating a fungible biography perspective, economic anthropology largely ignores the “high” entertainment culture of the West, such as theatre; it tends toward *non*-textual objects, some recent exceptions notwithstanding; and only rarely delves into history.³⁹ Textual things travel differently from non-textual things, and so warrant a combination of studies of things with studies of books in their contexts. The *Nick* case, moreover, spans two centuries, far longer than the sneakers or scooters featured in commodity biographies, and so it requires diachronic historicizing beyond the scope of ethnography.

Different from the book circuit, too, my study is concerned with that long course—a “life,” in metaphoric terms. The circuit is better suited to a shorter span, perhaps two generations long, and so I draw from other approaches for diachronic guidance. A multiple-generation schema is proposed by literary historian Franco Moretti, in the form of an evolutionary “tree” or graph diagram, which illuminates the vicissitudes of whole sub-genres, or their components (such as mystery clues), but Moretti’s schemata are less operational for single cases (which he eschews for literary history).⁴⁰ From the commerce of rare books comes provenance histories and writings *about* such records,⁴¹ which can inform academic book studies. Adams and Barker expanding from their circuit model, delineate a schematic life course, or survival story, of books, providing a touchstone for specific case studies.⁴²

The playscripts’ passage across time also involves new phases, places, agents, and activities beyond the publishing-and-theatre interaction. Moving beyond the realm of theatre, I

³⁹ Bjornar Olsen, “Scenes from a Troubled Engagement: Post-structuralism and Material Culture Studies,” in Tilley, *Handbook of Material Culture*, chap. 6.

⁴⁰ Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005). Moretti’s schema circumvents paratexts, dramatizations, and multiple motives of consumption: in his model, a reader’s acquiring a book indexes a direct response to literary form.

⁴¹ Madeleine Stern, *Antiquarian Bookselling in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985).

⁴² Adams and Barker, “A New Model for the Study of the Book.”

consider what happens *after* or *beside* the playbooks' planned purposes in stage production.⁴³ After their commodity "careers," anthropologist Kopytoff writes, things are "shuffled about in the flux of social life."⁴⁴ When a play retires from stage, its playscript still moves about society. What happens to playbooks of outmoded plays? The later phases are worth studying not only in exceptional cases—Shakespeare or *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—and not only for still-respectable plays, but even for forgotten titles: even, as in the *Nick* case, for aesthetic drivel and political embarrassments. The playscript inert on stereotype plates, brokered by rare books dealers, or "reposing on dusty library shelves"⁴⁵—these too are significant episodes; in fact by now, *Nick of the Woods* has spent more time outside theatre than in it. These later waves unfurl at our feet, so to speak. The story of scripts in archives or academic publishing reaches the realm of universities—involving the things *we* do with playscripts. That final scene, the story of our access to and handling of the object of study, is not always represented in the biographies of things. It was, though, encouraged by the reflexive turn of the 1990s, the shift to incorporate self-reference, first in ethnography, and then other disciplines, becoming a hallmark of post-structural scholarship. This trend surfaced in theatre scholar Shannon Jackson's contemplation of her bodily encounters with the historic documents on microform.⁴⁶ In archeology, Cornelius Holtorf expands his field's "life" model from the usual scope of the artifact's life in its original era to encompass the research situation (the archeological field dig): "activities such as discovery" are

⁴³ On the shift in design studies from authorial intention to consumer use, see Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

⁴⁴ Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *Life of Things*, chap. 2.

⁴⁵ Tom Taggart, "Story of Play," *Nick of the Woods; or, Telie, the Renegade's Daughter, an Old-Fashioned Melodrama, with Music* (New York: Samuel French, 1940), 96, New York Public Library.

⁴⁶ Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), chap 1.

“processes in the lives of things too.”⁴⁷ In this project, the *means* of research are also the *subjects* of research, and the life course touches the edge of this dissertation.

Thus within my motley method is integrated a concern about the “production of knowledge,” drawing from studies that criticize the vision of things as isolated and discrete entities, to consider the processes of knowledge that define and classify things, to ask not only *how were objects made*, but *how do objects become recognizable and valuable*? When does a playscript seem notable, exchangeable, or collectible? The script’s identity is constituted by its membership in some kind of set—one theatre company’s backstage documents, an Americana collector’s library, or a drama anthology. The way one playscript is grouped, whether conceptually, commercially, or spatially, offers another index of social practices and values. In semiotic anthropology, Mary Douglass and Baron Isherwood consider things as information systems in themselves—things work by “making visible and stable the categories of culture.”⁴⁸ Information appears at each phase of a thing’s path, and itself emerges as a commodity, as Appadurai insists⁴⁹—most obviously in the play publisher’s catalogue. Knowledge together with physical conditions affects the survival of a text, as Adams and Barker emphasize.⁵⁰ While humanities scholars look for shifts in concepts of things *in their representation in art*, an approach less germane to my analysis,⁵¹ I do consider plays’ representations, not in art, but in utilitarian texts, such as lists and catalogues. That orientation to functional documents resonates with social sciences’ Actor Network Theory, which analyzes knowledge-producing situations holistically, integrating humans, objects, machines, and processes, especially in venues related to

⁴⁷ Holtorf, “Notes on the Life History of a Pot Sherd,” *Journal of Material Culture* 7, no. 1 (March, 2002): 49-74.

⁴⁸ Mary Douglass and Baron Isherwood, *World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (1996; reprint. London: Routledge, 1979), 48.

⁴⁹ Appadurai, *Life of Things*, 41.

⁵⁰ Barker, “Libraries of the Mind,” in *Potencie of Life*, 38.

⁵¹ For a literary-philosophic approach to things, see *Things*, ed. Bill Brown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

the applied sciences (though without always attending to documents).⁵² More recently, anthropologists of governance have analyzed functional documents, such as files in a government bureau.⁵³ Culling from these diverse approaches, I consider how the playscript becomes different kinds of things, and especially as it shifts from the production of culture (a workaday backstage document) to the production of knowledge (a rare book or piece of data).

Values and Meanings

What one does with playscripts and knows about them is entwined with how one values them and what meanings they emanate. Those mutable values and meanings get shaped by larger movements (whether understood as social structures, systems, networks, or something else) which in the lives of *Nick* scripts are related to entertainment, literature, texts, national history, and intellectual property, among other variables. Just as the specimens I study represent to me my dissertation experiment and academic career, playscripts, as physical entities, can emit meanings besides the dramatic text they carry.⁵⁴ As the archeologist Carl Knappett argues, “objects and actions can be meaningful without necessarily being in the least bit symbolic”—or literary, in our nomenclature.⁵⁵ The *Nick of the Woods* playscripts were imbued with different values across their life: a showcase for a scribe’s handwriting agility; a price in the exchange between writer and theatre; a quantitative unit in a publisher inventory; a useful device for actors; or a sentimental souvenir. In later phases, scripts acquired symbolic values that accompanied their identity as historic documents: a relic of antiquated theatre, a primary source, and a material artifact, for my research project. The script can be property, or means to an end, or

⁵² For a summary of A.N.T., see Cassandra S. Crawford, “Actor Network Theory,” in *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, ed. George Ritzer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 1-3.

⁵³ Matthew S. Hull, “The File: Agency, Authority, and Autography in an Islamabad Bureaucracy,” *Language and Communication* 23, no. 3-4 (July-October 2003), doi:10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00019-3.

⁵⁴ Sherry Turkle, ed., *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007). The anthology assembles autobiographical essays within Turkle’s sociological-psychoanalytic frame.

⁵⁵ Knappett, *Thinking through Material Things: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 7.

rubbish. These varied uses, values, and meanings are—as the chapters imply—worth our attention, for yielding new observations about theatre, media, textual practices, and cultural production.

For the question of value, I've drawn from another eclectic set of studies. Political economy has long discussed monetary value, based in exchange value (in contrast to use value) as well as commodity status: a professional scribe exchanged the labor of copying for money, while publishing magnified the script's commodity status, which was inflected through intellectual property rights. Economic values are necessary, even if not sufficient, to understand a material text's life. Yet they too change. According to Appadurai, objects move in and out of commodity mode: "today's gift is tomorrow's commodity. Yesterday's commodity is tomorrow's found art object. Today's art object is tomorrow's junk. And yesterday's junk is tomorrow's heirloom."⁵⁶ Scripts are sometimes also gifts, or a mixture of gift and commodity, as when donated to institutional libraries. As libraries expanded, a once-ordinary playbook became a "rare book." The categories of *capital* advanced by Pierre Bourdieu offer a concept that captures value and power, a kind of clout, that is not always or entirely reducible to economic power (nor separable from it), and which traverses social and cultural spheres, even far from government and finance.⁵⁷ While we can speak of capital across spheres, it does not assume the same form everywhere; on this point I take note of anthropologists following Appadurai who articulate *regimes* of value particular to one cultural group or social context.⁵⁸

The life of a playscript also crosses modes of value: economic (for exchange); utility (when used backstage); sentimental (when the script becomes a memento); aesthetic (when

⁵⁶ Arjun Appadurai, "The Thing Itself," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (Winter, 2006), doi: 10.1215/08992363-18-1-15.

⁵⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, trans. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁵⁸ Fred Myers, ed., *Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2002).

scribes added flourishes); intellectual (a kind of use value for scholarship); and symbolic (when the script represents the theatre world, or antique, or Americana). It falls into the background, as when a waiting actress doodles on her playscript pages. Even being taken for granted, and ordinary, signifies a kind of a low-grade background value, a belonging to everyday or workaday life. What defines value, worth, or commodity status is not inherent features, but social actions and the larger system of categories, or knowledge.

The background of this study is this array of postulates: the playscript is a material object; a workaday document in theatre; a means of production text enabling entertainment; a mobile, enduring linguistic artifact that is transformed materially and culturally by specialized practices in several social settings; and it operates in interrelation with human practice and other objects. But these ideas by themselves, as Appadurai notes when advancing the “biography” procedure, do not “illuminate the concrete, historical circulation of things,” while models, as Darnton says, “have a way of freezing human beings out of history.” For unfreezing the circulation, I turn to the particular case, narrating the lives of playscripts based on the *Nick of the Woods* story, while at the same time mapping the course of the dissertation.⁵⁹

The Social Life of *Nick of the Woods*

In 1838 in New Orleans, the southern playwright, George Washington Harby, dramatized a recent two-volume novel, Doctor Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay, a Tale of Kentucky*, which Bird had written and published in Philadelphia earlier that year; Harby or the theatre changed Bird's sub-title to *Kentucky in '82*.⁶⁰ Across the Atlantic,

⁵⁹ Appadurai, *Life of Things*, 5.

⁶⁰ Bird, *Nick of the Woods, or The Jibbenainosay, A Tale of Kentucky*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1837); Harby, *Nick of the Woods; or, Kentucky in '82*, MS (ca. 1838), Clifton Waller Barrett American Literature collection, University of Virginia Library. [One regional chronicle cites G. W. Harley [sic], *Nick of the Woods; or The Salt River Roarer*. William G. B. Carson, *The Theatre on the Frontier: the Early Years of the St. Louis Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1932; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), 270.]

the English actor John Thomas Haines also dramatized the novel, using the parallel British edition, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay; A Story of Kentucky*, though this sub-title was revised as *The Altar of Revenge!*⁶¹ At around the same time, a New York based, Hispanic immigrant woman Louisa H. Medina dramatized the novel for production, first sub-titled *The Renegade's Daughter*, but other sub-titles came later. This version, propelled by the star actor Joseph Proctor, underwent the most thriving career on stage, the most publications, and survived the best in print copies. Chapter two describes these first-round versions, or rather, the conditions of their emergence: the constraints of writing for commercial theatre (sometimes for individual stars) and for spectacle melodrama. The condition of 1838 dramatizing lends itself to thinking about both production and the product—that is, about the middling status of the author, the mutable playtext, and the transient playscript. The status of writer, drama, and script were entwined, all affected by the economies and ideologies of dramatic authorship, original version, and literary property, which differed drastically from the modern forms that fomented decades later. There were, though, gradations and variations of authorship, which *Nick* cases illustrate. The job position ranged from freelance to commission (in contemporary terms), such as writing for a single star or one theatre. Soon after those first three came three anonymous (or unattributed) English versions, known to us through copies submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's play licensing office in 1840 and 1844, followed by an equestrian version in 1858, the last preserved manuscript of this era of *Nick*.⁶² These represent the anonymous (or unattributed) type of playwright. The conditions of the late-feather-pen era theatre writer were distinct from the

⁶¹ Bird, *Nick of the Woods: a Story of Kentucky*, ed. William Harrison Ainsworth, 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1837); Haines, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Altar of Revenge! a Melodrama in Two Acts* (London: Duncombe, n.d., ca. 1838).

⁶² *Nick of the Woods; or, Kentucky in 1782, a Drama in Three Acts from Dr Bird's Popular Novel*, Add. MS 42956 #13, June-September 1840; *Nick of the Woods*, Add. MS 42979 #7, October-November 1844; and *The Jibbenainosay; or, The White Horse of Nick of the Woods*, Add. MS 52971 4x #W, January-February 1858, Lord Chamberlain's Plays, British Library.

ideal of the typewriter-era playwright, an ideal that sometimes misleads analyses of old playtexts and the agency of playwrights.

These dramatizations were quickly handed over to theatre workers for local production. Harby's New Orleans and Haines's Great British versions ran for a short spurt, perhaps with later revivals less visible to hindsight. Medina's, however, looped through US theatre centers and peripheries, and travelled internationally, waning only after a half-century of fairly regular appearances, in the 1880s. Backstage copies were perpetually active as *Nick* came to stage and reached audiences. All were hand-written until the play was published, and even then, backstage work used a mixture of print and handwriting—one clear instance of the oral/manuscript/print jumble that characterizes theatre across the age of print. Chapter three considers *Nick's* stage "career,"⁶³ the life of the playscript in the medium of theatre, from the close-up view of backstage texts that, while invisible to audiences, enabled stage productions. I survey two kinds of copies, the promptbook, and actor's copies, with a glance at the musical documents. The survey frames these scripts as "workaday documents," part of the everyday culture inside this worksite. The features of backstage playscript copies invite social semiotic considerations, to consider backstage handling as learned practices embedded in the circulations of trade knowledge, with links to symbols and practices in the rest of society (in an era of intensifying symbol systems). This chapter foregrounds the less celebrated figure of the prompter, the human hub of stage production, and the textual form of the promptbook, one of the few copies bearing exchange value (to publishers). Not as uniform as, say, account books, nor as idiosyncratic as commonplace books, promptbooks manifest a middle-way "flexible repertoire" common across a

⁶³ The term "career" applied to *documents* echoes institution ethnographies, e.g., Richard H.R. Harper, *Inside the IMF: An Ethnography of Documents, Technology and Organisational Action* (Boston: Academic Press, 1998).

sprawling theatre world, refracted by local companies (in a house style), or professional role (in prompter's culture) or individual acts (doodle sketches).

The first English version of *Nick* by Haines was published in England at least fifteen years before Medina's version was published in the US, one of the episodes in which the national context did steer the flow of playscripts. Here the narrative exits the world of theatre for the medium of print in the business of publishing—shifting from stages to stereotype, prompters to press-men. *Nick* entered print as during the elaboration of a century-old format, the Acting Edition, a cheap booklet that bore information about past productions and instructions for future stagings, especially in preliminary paratexts. Across the successive editions of the play over the mid-nineteenth century, signs of commerce on the printed playbook increased, in step with the ascent of industrial capitalism. The printing of Medina's version coincided with the advent of a new breed of play publisher, one best characterized as entrepreneurial and frankly commercial, especially in the person of Samuel French (and son). Chapter four traces the sequence of five publishers—first in the UK, then the US, then transnationally—who handled Haines's and Medina's versions: in London, porn-trafficker John Duncombe first issued Haines's *Nick*, an edition soon bought by drama specialist Thomas Lacy;⁶⁴ William Spencer in Boston first published Medina's play; Samuel French (and son) acquired the stock of Duncombe, Lacy and Spencer; and finally the Londoner John Dicks bootlegged a cheaper reprint of Medina's play.⁶⁵ These five publishers, few in number but monumental in effect, exploited the technology of stereotype, the cheaper varieties of paper, the dramatic copyright acts (1833 in England, 1856 in the US), the systems of postal delivery, and (in the US) the proliferation of theatre culture across

⁶⁴ Haines, *Nick of the Woods* (London: Duncombe, n.d., ca. 1838); Haines, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Altar of Revenge! A Melodrama in Two Acts* (London: T.H. Lacy, n.d., ca. 1852).

⁶⁵ Medina, *Nick of the Woods; A Drama in Three Acts* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, n.d. ca.1856); Medina, *Nick* (New York: Samuel French, n.d., ca. 1860-1915); Medina, *Nick* (London: Dicks, n.d., ca. 1880s).

the expanding nation-state, to manufacture and market cheap pamphlet-format plays. Publishers' commodities (which included non-textual products, notably make-up) aimed for and reached other markets besides professional theatre: individual book collectors and amateur theatre participants—perhaps a greater market even than professional practitioners. Building on the few studies of play publishing in the era, these portraits of *Nick's* publishers function as a survey of the larger segment of late nineteenth-century play publishing, across production, distribution, and—to the slight extent that we can deduce it—consumption. The approach scrutinizes paratexts in relation to the larger economic context of mechanization and (semi-) industrialization, including partial rationalization and internationalization of markets, which involved not only goods but information, in the form of catalogues and advertisements.

Across the mid-century, *Nick* was staged over a considerable reach of the English-speaking world. It appeared in pre-statehood California and the hinterlands of Montana; crossed Maine to New Brunswick; looped several times through Ireland and Scotland; and even visited Australia. While the plays became familiar theatrically, Bird's novel devolved to the status of boys' fiction, reprinted in book as well as series formats. The main characters, especially Nick of the Woods/Jibbenainosay, permeated culture as a veritable household name, a reflexive allusion for journalists, while both Nick and Telie became race-horses' names.⁶⁶ As happened with familiar plays, one or two black actors played the lead in England, soon after which *Nick* was burlesqued by a minstrel trio (in London).⁶⁷ In the US, Indians, having long been impersonated by white actors in Red-face, began appearing in nearby shows, then the entre-act, and finally

⁶⁶ Reports of the race-horse *Nick of the Woods* appear in the UK and of a Telie or Tellie thoroughbred in the US, e.g., *York (England) Herald*, December 12, 1875, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale; and *New York Times*, August 17, 1884, ProQuest *New York Times* Online.

⁶⁷ *The Era* (London), July 30, 1865, British Newspapers, 1600-1900, Cengage Gale. The notice ambiguously associates the "Black" actor P.G. Dunbar with a *Nick* production; another notice in *The Era*, August 20, 1881, seems the first of a long chain referring to an ongoing burlesque minstrel *Nick*.

within the play.⁶⁸ This off-page life of *Nick*, though peripheral to my study, reflects the status of its story in Anglo society, which affected the course of playscripts.

Not long after the autograph episode described at the top of this introduction, *Nick* retired from the commercial stage; the star, Joseph Proctor, formally retired in the late 1880s, and died soon after, just as Modernist theatre was emerging. The few revivals framed the play as old, as a relic of the Bowery days, or as the late Proctor's vehicle—not as a normal piece to mount. Proctor's own copies vanished, but printed copies used by others survived, and the play remained in Samuel French catalogues into the 1910s. In standard Theatre History accounts, *Nick* appears dead by 1900, though a major reference text describes it as “still being played” in 1920.⁶⁹ Both are partly accurate: *Nick* retired from regular *commercial* appearances in the 1880s, and was demoted from the roster of respectable American plays—but still it underwent other kinds of activities, in textual media, different entertainment media, and institutions of learning. The next section turns our gaze to these arenas.

In the twentieth-century life of the outmoded playscript, one of the key sites is the library, in the larger realm of institutions of learning, the main locus of chapter five. *Nick* entered public and university libraries just as these institutions were proliferating and assuming new forms, exemplified in the rise of public archives and special collections and the germinations of theatre studies in universities. Unlike theatre and publishing, the library was not involved in *reproduction*, but rather in *preservation*; this marks one of the instances when the playscript changes cultural and social identity without drastic material change. The process did entail smaller physical alterations, by binding, stamping, and gluing in labels, body modifications that position the book within the institutional auspices. Apart from a few recorded purchases, *Nick*

⁶⁸ “Indians on the Stage,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1892, 4, Nineteenth-Century US Newspapers, Gale.

⁶⁹ Rosemarie K. Bank, “Nick of the Woods,” in *Cambridge Guide to American Theatre*, ed. Don B. Wilmeth and Tice L. Miller (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 345.

was often donated to libraries in surprisingly steady waves from the 1890s to the 1990s—a moment of gift exchange in the economic variegations of the playscripts lives. These movements cover a diverse array of collectors, donors or brokers, and institutions, although that diversity reveals some visible patterns, such as donations from alumni of men’s private northeast colleges. Libraries are not necessarily a *cul de sac* in the life of the playscript, but nodes in the circulation of knowledge about plays, mutually interacting with publishing, theatre practice, and theatre scholarship based in universities. One interesting figure in this juncture is the first formal drama professor in the United States, Brander Matthews, who established a “Theatre Museum,” which housed *Nick of the Woods*. Chapter five moves from these sites and practices of preservation to the new documents they engendered: *Nick* was represented in texts that *referred* to plays—catalogues, lists, bibliographies, and histories—old genres that now proliferated to new degrees, often in relation to libraries. These shifts signal a new identity of the playscript and reflect the paths of access to it, while they also index the shift to the production of knowledge. The representations (or omissions) of *Nick* on publisher catalogue or theatre advocates’ recommendations express the cultural values associated with outmoded plays in that era.

Nick was also involved in the old medium of theatre, but in a new formation of it, low-budget or amateur revival productions. Around the same time, it entered new entertainment media of radio and television (though not film). In terms of the means of production playscript, these mid-twentieth century productions typically relied on a mixture of print, handwriting, and the small-scale mechanical reproduction of typewriting, an important addition to theatre work. Chapter six describes episodes of revival in the low-budget theatre different from the stages of *Nick*’s commercial career, which were in one direction closely associated with learning institutions, and in another, responding to mass entertainment media. In 1936, *Nick* was staged in

the Massachusetts women's college, Mount Holyoke, as an educational project in a practicum course. The course and production were directed by an English professor, Jeannette Marks, herself a Little Theatre playwright (and lesbian-feminist semi-socialist); while the instance is exceptional in pedagogy—teaching through staging—as well as casting—with women impersonating men—it does signal the changing academic attitudes toward melodrama, while individually Marks's career embodied the intersection of Little Theatre and universities. That same year, *Nick* had its first encounter with electronic media—radio.⁷⁰ Though no details of that script or production remain, histories of radio limn some of its features (such as the show's commercial aegis).

In 1940, the enduring publishing company Samuel French repackaged *Nick of the Woods* in a nostalgic, parody edition, supplemented with how-to advice for amateurs, and so the life course loops back through commercial play publishing.⁷¹ Melodrama parodies were popular from the 1920s into the 1960s, which, as part of low-budget or amateur theatre, can be understood in relation to mass entertainment media. This multi-media landscape is embodied in the work of one minor playwright, Tom Taggart, who revised *Nick of the Woods* for Samuel French. His sub-genre (writing for amateur theatre) and his topics, which included amateur theatre and mass media, speak to the multi-media theme. A generation later, a provincial professional company, Dark Horse Theatre, mounted *Nick* for Colorado state park tourists, using a renovated public pool. An Internet curriculum vitae, a warm email exchange, and paper mail supplied me with information about this late instance of parody melodrama (including the only stage photograph of *Nick* ever encountered), along with a typescript representing the workaday

⁷⁰ *Nick of the Woods*, November 15, 1936, radio broadcast, New York City, WOR.

⁷¹ Taggart, Louisa Medina, and John T. Haines, *Nick of the Woods* (New York: Samuel French, 1940).

scripts of mid-twentieth century, small-scale theatre.⁷² In 1965, *Nick* was broadcast in England by the BBC as one episode in a six-part series, *Gaslight Theatre*, which was also a parody.⁷³ As the first government-sponsored version of *Nick*, this instance had quite distinct auspices from earlier productions, and as a television show, it involved the remediation of the story to film—though the final *presentation* medium, television, did not necessarily alter the medium of the playscript itself. Despite their incommensurable differences, chapter six groups these low-budget, live productions with mass entertainment media—radio and television—under the umbrella of marginal revivals of outmoded drama.

In the late 1960s, *Nick's* life lulled again, except for a few copies trickling into library collections. In the larger view, though, separate strands were converging—library collections, interest in outmoded theatre, school theatre departments, academic publishing, and communications technology—in a way that enabled *Nick* to cross wholly into the sphere of universities—and to the industry that supplies their texts. Chapter seven returns to the arena of publishing, yet to the particular division of academic publishing. Publishers of anthologies, microform, and digital databases repackaged *Nick of the Woods* for scholars and students—not for theatre practice. Starting in the late 1960s, the pioneering microform company Readex began ongoing production of an omnibus nineteenth-century English-language drama collection on microform, a cold-war textual technology harnessed for humanities scholarship.⁷⁴ The story of *Nick* in microform, across multiple versions and publishing projects, illustrates the complex, unfulfilled “revolution” of micropublishing in general. While drastic for its new media, the design of assembling outmoded plays had precedent in the old book format, but in the

⁷² Dark Horse Players, *The Tender Tale of Telie Doe*, TS, personal collection, Greig Steiner, Estes, CO.

⁷³ Alec Clunes, adapter, *The Blood-Craz'd Scourge of the Redskin Wilderness; or, What You Will*, dir. Bryan Sears, episode 3 of *Gaslight Theatre*, August 21, 1965, BBC2.

⁷⁴ *Nineteenth Century English and American Drama* (New Canaan, CT: Readex, ca. 1965-1995), microform.

reconfigured mode of the anthology as a school textbook (and cross-over to trade customers). These anthologies reflected the new college climate, in which it was normal to stage these works earnestly, for educational purposes, and reasonable to study them. *Nick of the Woods* was included in the 1976 paperback anthology, *Victorian Melodramas*, which transformed the appearance and identity of the play and its author.⁷⁵ Riding that growing scholastic market, 1990s publishers harnessed digital technologies to issue the literary *database*. Emerging from the microform business, ProQuest Literature and Learning Online digitized Medina's *Nick* into its enormous, hyperlinked, electronic collection. This remediation involved format changes, new paratexts, and a new material mediation of electronic screen, and it was enabled by the shift in capitalism from industry to service models—from buying things—books or microform—to renting electronic access. The ProQuest *Nick* highlights how the context of economic production and access shape the encounter of reading. Seen in this material context, the case of drama on digital databases resonates less than one might expect with the themes that color the current conversations about digital literature, notably concepts of the post-human and democratization of knowledge.

Before concluding the study, a coda considers the most recent repackaging of *Nick*, a 2001 small-scale print job produced by copy-shop means, sold by a provincial antiquarian books company run by a retired theatre scholar Walter Meserve (one of the first to write about Medina).⁷⁶ Merging features of history textbook, leisure reading, and backstage script, it embodies the themes of earlier chapters. That I purchased a copy on-line, too, highlights the final stage of the playscript's life as an object sought and handled by us, contemporary scholars of material texts.

⁷⁵ James L. Smith, ed., *Victorian Melodramas: Seven English, French, and American Melodramas* (London: Dent, 1976).

⁷⁶ Medina, *Nick of the Woods* (Brooklin, ME: Feedback Theatrebooks & Prospero Press, 2001).

Rationale

As an historical reconstruction, the life narrative sheds light on what has happened to textual artifacts, especially on moments and sites of textual activity that we have not much noticed. *Nick's* course seemed to have an uncanny ability to steer, at every phase, into the dim margins of fashionable topics: dramatizing rather than inter-textuality; cheap rather than artisan publishing; amateur rather than avant-garde theatre; special collections rather than archives; and databases rather than social network media. Also, the large view of a life course expands common categories—*theatre*, which encompasses marginal kinds; *reading*, which includes memorizing-scanning; *writing*, which is often copying; *value*, which runs from financial to sentimental; and *meaning*, which encompasses more than literary symbolism. These neglected topics, as margins and supplements tend to do, at least complicate some of the prevailing strategies of analysis, and moreover embody themes germane to current academic trends, such as authorship, agency, and media, as I suggest at the relevant junctures. By crossing separate social spheres—*theatre*, publishing, learning institutions—the life model links the disciplines that study those respective arenas, especially the realms of theatre and books, thus desegregating theatre as an object of study. As this narration of episodes reveals, the playscript participates in multiple social spheres and media, in ideology and economies, and hence illuminates the social processes of things in and beyond theatre.

Chapter Two

Dramatizing Novels:

Writing Provisional Playscripts in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

In the era of spectacle melodrama, the play-text—the literature carried by the playbook—was rarely considered precious and permanent. Ordinarily, a dramatist’s manuscript inevitably underwent drastic transformation by multiple hands backstage or by performers on stage: the writer’s creation was provisional, not protected property. Stage roles were not fixed as written, since for performances, actors elaborated silent action (“business” or “gags”) and lines were re-assigned from one character to another, while both speeches and minor characters were blithely added or subtracted, as happened in the productions of *Nick of the Woods*. Across several dramatizations of *Nick*, the set of minor female roles shifted: two or three figures appear variously as Nell, Nellie, Phoebe, Jemima, Jane, Polly, Susan, Patience, or “two daughters”—while at least one production introduced Indian Squaws to the action.⁷⁷ A promptbook central to this chapter inserted a lengthy and non-sequitur comic monologue for the secondary peddler character, Pardon Dodge, as promptbooks *per force* reconfigured the text (a process explained in chapter three). These transmutations indicate how deeply playtexts from their first conception were subjected to the demands of theatre business: the need to allure audiences, to appease a star’s demands, or to align with the company’s cast and equipment. This expected quality of plasticity—the awareness that a play was destined for modification—comprised one of the core features of playwriting in the era of weak dramatic copyright.

⁷⁷Women Indians do make cameo appearances in Bird’s novel, chap. 34, but not in any early dramatization. The squaws were listed on: playbill, *Nick of the Woods*, Dramatic Museum, Worcester, MA, May 4, 1853, Readex/Newsbank American Broadside and Ephemera series 1, no. 21057.

In tandem with provisional text, the value imbued in the playwright's *material* script (the physical fascicle) was short-term and modest, not the stuff of heirlooms or archives. This ultimate transient or disposable quality of the dramatist's playscript was entwined with other factors: the middling social and artistic status of playwriting; the telos of writing *at the service of* theatre; the rapid turn-around of new plays; the (weak) intellectual property regime for drama; and the peculiar syncretic economy of theatre, where often industrial quantities of money were channeled through feudal or pre-modern modes of exchange. The early emergence of *Nick of the Woods* plays manifests these inter-related factors. Even the *absence* of physical evidence, while it vexes our investigations, serves to reinforce this vision of the playscript's provisional status. The economics of playwriting in the mid-nineteenth century, crucially the factor of remuneration, suggest themselves through this reconstruction of *Nick of the Woods* cases, a survey assembled from disparate and piecemeal traces.

Commercial playwriting was labor of an unusual kind, differing from other textual labors (such as journal hacks) by its orientation toward stage production, a phenomenon complicated by theatre's micro-economy, intense social relations, and the multiple-media fusion constituting stage production. Dramatic composition required not only advanced literacy, ideally manifested through presentable handwriting, but also acumen in both drama format—the knowledge of how plays should look on the page, in punctuation and layout—and the social hierarchies of actors. Playwriting differed from theatre's roster of other sub-contracted labor, the work inventoried by theatre historian Tracy Davis,⁷⁸ for both its *social* quality, as a more isolated task, and its *substance*, as text—in contrast to the tasks of handling ropes, textiles, money, people, or dirt. Unlike backstage relations, where scripts circulated hand to hand *without* buying and selling, the

⁷⁸ Davis, "Laborers of the Nineteenth Century Theater: The Economies of Gender and Industrial Organization," *Journal of British Studies* 33, no.1 (January 1994): 32-53, doi:10.1086/386043.

writer's transaction hinged on a distinctly *financial* exchange. The playwright's product was primarily the *text*, or what bibliographer G. Thomas Tanselle calls the "work,"⁷⁹ with the material document merely its temporary vessel. The property disputes that arose revolved around the text rather than the paper booklet (whereas with promptbooks, the unique book itself bore value). The *Nick* writers, like most dramatists, produced a small-scale commodity, that is, a text *created for exchange*, in contrast to other modes: writing for one's own use; for private circulation in one's small social milieu (a "coterie"); for publishing or closet-reading; or for amateur theatre production.⁸⁰ Even though this commodity was not peddled on a large, public, impersonal market—the route of regular capitalist goods—but usually through personal, social encounters, it was understood as a saleable thing, in both positive and negative connotations. As one of Medina's antagonists put it, the theatre staged her "products," while even favorable references refer to her "manufacture."⁸¹ In affirming rhetoric, Robert M. Bird's own drama prologue, voicing cultural nationalism, allegorized plays as manufactured products: "Our ware's domestic... Uncle Sam and his factories forever!"⁸² Frank Rahill, a 1960s melodrama historian, declares that "manufacture is a better word than creation for the process" of writing melodrama, describing the *Nick* by Haines as being "of English manufacture," not anachronistically.⁸³ These quasi-metaphors arose amid pronounced discourses about money, finance, and exchange in the US, given the 1837 economic "panic" (which bankrupted several theatres, wounded the book

⁷⁹ For Tanselle, the term *text* refers to the "evidence," or "report," of the writer's creation; *work* is that ideal creation, and its medium is language, not paper and ink—a lexicon different from the one I use. *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (1992; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), esp. 13, 40, and 68-9.

⁸⁰ *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. Tom Bottomore, Lawrence Harris, V.G. Kieman, and Ralph Miliband (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), s.v. "commodity." On coterie writing, see Margaret J.M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); on the overlap of closet and stage drama, see Philip Cox, *Reading Adaptations: Novels and Verse Narratives on the Stage, 1790-1840* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

⁸¹ Broadside ["Attack on Thomas S. Hamblin following the Death of Actress Louisa Missouri in 1838"] (New York: s.n., n.d., ca. 1838), Readex/Newsbank American Broadside and Ephemera series 1, no. 14140; *New York Mirror*, February 2, 1836, American Periodicals Series 1800-1850, ProQuest.

⁸² Bird, *City Looking Glass*, ed. Arthur H. Quinn (New York: Colophon, 1933), 3.

⁸³ Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), 171, 225.

trade, and touched the working lives of playwrights), enmeshed with debates in the United States over the very *material* of currency—paper or coin—as the currency systems were still just solidifying, and all this during intensifying industrialization, which, if it did not re-engineer theatre operations, did reshape the social, material, and ideological world in which theatre operated.⁸⁴

Modern drama historians, even in recent studies, have lamented the hasty writing and textual plasticity that characterized playwriting in the decades before typewriting and modernism; they reconstruct the conditions of writing in order to explain their *à priori* concern, the decline in dramatic *quality* of the texts.⁸⁵ The plots pocked by causal gaps, frayed by loose ends, and conveyed through malleable speeches seem unrecognizable as literature to modern lenses; only the more fixed text (notably verse drama) seems redeemable as drama in hindsight. The 1930s theatre historian Arthur Quinn bemoaned “the grim pressure of circumstances which made a career for an American playwright of the eighteen thirties almost an impossibility”—precisely as he introduced a small-press fine edition of Robert M. Bird’s recovered verse play, around the time that he edited anthologies that excluded *Nick of the Woods* plays (as I explain in chapter seven).⁸⁶ Both fiction and drama about theatre reproduced a particular figure of the contemporary playwright, a hapless man subjugated to managerial neglect, actor narcissism or incompetence, and paltry pay.⁸⁷ Some playwrights themselves vocalized complaints, including the novelist whose work Medina dramatized thrice, Lord Bulwer-Lytton.⁸⁸ Indeed, the entwined

⁸⁴ Robert Garson, “Counting Money: The US Dollar and American Nationhood, 1781-1820,” *Journal of American Studies* 35 (2001) I: 21-46, EBSCOHost, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S002187580100651X>.

⁸⁵ The lament underlies, e.g., Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*, and Alan Fischler, “Guano and Poetry: Payment for Playwriting in Victorian England,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 62 (March 2001): 43-52, doi: 10.1215/00267929-62-1-43.

⁸⁶ Quinn, editor’s note to *A City Looking Glass*, by Robert M. Bird, v.

⁸⁷ One satiric playwright character is found in the novel by Frederick Reynolds, *A Playwright’s Adventures* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1831), New York Public Library.

⁸⁸ Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*, 128.

values of playwright, writing labor, playtext, and material playscript underwent change, in law and convention, across the early phase of dramatizations of *Nick*, 1838 to 1858, and even more by the last new version in 1893.⁸⁹

But to avoid a teleological skew and retro-imposition of standards, it behooves us to emphasize how normal these un-modern practices seemed in that time: many playwrights submitted to the task of working in literate servitude, writing a mutable text on a transient set of pages, which were exchanged irreversibly for a flat, one-time fee. Meredith McGill, criticizing this lament mode in relation to other genres, points out that hack-writing conditions also opened up possibilities for marginal writers, as the *Nick* dramatizers arguably were.⁹⁰ Writing provisional text *for* theatre was more service than self-expression; it was literary labor, entrenched in the material requirements of staging and the social-economic dynamics of theatre. Playwriting in the high melodrama era—as it hardly dazzles us with literary quality—encourages us to recognize the full situation of playwriting. Nineteenth-century dramatizations of *Nick of the Woods* represent this ordinary practice: writing as professional playwrights, from prior texts, across genres, into transient documents, and in the service of commercial theatre. Answering the question in one of Medina’s prologues, “Must her labors be forgot?,”⁹¹ this chapter remembers those labors as the emergent phase of the life of the playscripts, as it surveys each of the *Nick* dramatizers and the variables of dramatizing for spectacle melodrama. First, though, comes an elaborate caveat about the remnants of this theatrical labor, the primary sources of this historical reconstruction.

Nick of the Woods Specimens

⁸⁹ For accounts of UK playwright empowerment, see Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*, chap. 6-7.

⁹⁰ Meredith McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 18-19.

⁹¹ Louisa Medina, Prologue, *New York Mirror*, March 12, 1836, 294.

Less than a decade after Bird's novel came to market, *The Dramatic Authors of America* would claim hyperbolically, "This admirable novel...has been dramatized in every city"⁹² of the US. Dramatizing, known then by that very term, had become a prevalent method of playwriting. Any successful novel typically provoked multiple dramatizations, ranging in quantity from a few (*Rienzi*) to hundreds (*Jane Eyre*), with *Nick* representing the modest level, with about eight on record.⁹³ Dramatizing was also an international response: the majority of known *Nick* plays, in fact, originated in England (where Medina's version would also tour). *Nick* plays, then, can hardly be considered distinctly or particularly American; rather, they manifest the material-cultural circulations throughout the networks of metropolitan centers, flows routed by language and urbanization perhaps more than by geographic boundaries or national ideology.

Of that galaxy of disparate *Nicks* by multiple writers in separate places (and in motion along tours), most versions are now "lost"—destroyed, unidentified, or invisible.⁹⁴ Six versions of *Nick* dramas remain preserved and accessible as written documents. Three were composed by known writers in the immediate wake of the novel's publication: Louisa H. Medina in New York, George Washington Harby in New Orleans, and John Thomas Haines in London, around 1838 to 1839. This trio forms the core of this chapter, though other versions also appeared. Three by unknown writers followed over the next eighteen years, preserved in the form of manuscripts submitted to England's theatre license bureau, the Lord Chamberlain's office.

All six extant copies are densely mediated—that is, multiply copied and transformed from whatever playscript the writer handed over to a theatre. Nothing conceivable as an "original," ur-text, autograph, or holograph survives, leaving no way to infer a writer's ideology,

⁹² James Rees, *The Dramatic Authors of America* (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber, 1845), 30.

⁹³ For quantitative comparisons of dramatizations, see H. Philip Bolton, *Women Writers Dramatized: a Calendar of Performances from Narrative, to 1900* (London: Cassell, 2000).

⁹⁴ Tanselle remarks that for all the contingencies of an old document surviving, "we must always marvel at what we have." *Rationale*, 43.

or even handwriting, from any specimen. Of the 1838 trio, Medina's and Haines's reach us as published scripts, decorated by illustrations and commercial matter (shown in appendixes J-O); by the time Medina's version went to press, over a decade after the premiere, one character had vanished from it. The specimen of Harby's version was a scribe's backstage copy, meaning that ellipses, insertions, and excisions dot the text, accompanied by errors ("Knick of the Woods") as well as an *optional* finale—it reflects the un-fixed mutability of working playscripts. (See appendix A). The three subsequent specimens, as theatres' official submissions to the British state, were copies of workaday backstage copies of unknown writers' drafts (shown in appendixes G to I). Besides Rees's hyperbolic estimate of a *Nick* in every US city, other print records attest to versions that left no remains: one by a Mullen in the US west, another by a Davis in England, a 1890s Nevada version that proprietors submitted for US copyright, and a recurring late-century minstrel burlesque in London (for which a script was less crucial). These *invisible* playscripts do figure in the biography of material texts, though by methods different from those used for surviving specimens, and hence are ignored in this study. The range of specimens—partial or full text, manuscript or print, and sometimes invisible—represents the typical fate of commercial playscripts: mediated, missing, and hardly mentioned. These deficits can be recast as a theoretical benefit, a reminder that the writer's mind is inaccessible, and that the text was modified in a chain of transformations across the long, jagged trajectory of the playscripts from then to now (the story that unfolds across later chapters).⁹⁵

The first three known dramatizers of 1838-39 were professional playwrights at the time they turned to *Nick*, although those careers differed in timing, scope, place, and social position: a

⁹⁵ This trajectory, with its inevitable mutations of a work, is not a neutral category, but a fault-line in debates about authors, intention, and originals in literary editing and theory. For a judicious account of these tensions, see David C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 335-346.

Hispanic woman in New York; an apostate Jew in New Orleans; and an actor in London, each of whom I now describe in turn.

Louisa H. Medina

Still only in her twenties, in 1838 Louisa Honore Medina (ca. 1813-1839) was experienced in writing melodrama, generating an oeuvre of serious plays before *Nick*, her last or penultimate drama. Her core work, and her public recognition, lay in dramatizing recent popular novels, a specialization not shared by the other *Nick* playwrights. A New York newspaper column asserted, “Every novel is sure to be adapted to the stage, if once the publick [sic] voice is unequivocally expressed in its favor, by the...Bowery [Theatre], and almost simultaneously, if we are to judge by the recent specimens of diligence afforded *by the playwright of this establishment*”—meaning Medina.⁹⁶ A rival playwright, Alexander Allen, recalled: “dramatized versions of Bulwer’s novels gained great popularity at the Bowery, through Hamblin’s success with Miss Medina’s dramatizations.”⁹⁷ She was one of few women dramatists, perhaps the only one so prolific in the US, and rarer still for having written professionally, comparable perhaps to England’s dramatist-novelist Catherine Gore. That is, she earned livelihood from textual labor.

Though it is not evident how much Medina was paid, nor by what mode (flat-fee or salary), there are signs of her having had “benefits,” that is, having taken the profit from designated nights of a play’s run as one component of remuneration. By contract, it fell on a pre-determined slot, the third or fourth night of a play’s run, and across a set pattern of subsequent nights of a run (third, sixth, etc.). The event showcased the playwright’s new play, usually

⁹⁶ “The Bowery,” *New-York Mirror* 13, no. 36, March 6, 1836, 286, America’s Historical Newspapers, Readex.

⁹⁷ George O. Seilhamer, *An Interviewer’s Album: Comprising a Series of Chats with Eminent Players and Playwrights* (New York: Alvin Perry and Co, 1881), 125, accessed April 6, 2010, Internet Archive, <http://www.archive.org/details/interviewersalbu00seil>.

watched by the writer from a box seat, mutually visible to the rest of the audience.⁹⁸ The event was the most public face of the playscript's commodity exchange. To launch the benefit, the playwright often wrote a prologue or epilogue to be recited by actors, who sometimes *impersonated* the playwright (as a type, rather than a particular person),⁹⁹ sometimes spoke *about* the generic playwright, and sometimes enacted a brief dramatic scene (often meta-theatrical), but at other times delivered a plain oration. Prologues, often printed separately, were an occasional literature, valued independently of their corresponding playtexts, though framing the plays at the theatre event. These recitations invariably pleaded for audience approval, as in Medina's 1837 address, "As You're mighty, Oh! be generous too."¹⁰⁰

These public appeals were economic: the writers and their advocates presented writing as *work* and (therefore) as warranting remuneration, though never in such blunt terms. Unlike the older, gentlemanly disavowal typified in Bird's claim that *Nick of the Woods* was "written with no other object than to amuse himself, and—if that might also be,—the public,"¹⁰¹ theatre texts did acknowledge material need and exchange, through prologues and other vehicles. A magazine reported that Harby, having "furnished" an actor with his *Nick* script, received nothing "but the honour of doing so, if there be such a thing attached to dramatic composition."¹⁰² Although honor was at least conceivable (while inconceivable for hack writing), the report implied that it could not suffice as reward for labor. References to remuneration, moreover, also served to advance a writer's reputation as *professional*, in the sense of serious, distinct from a dilettante or

⁹⁸ Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660-1710* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Kewes discusses the economic and social dimensions of benefits in an earlier era.

⁹⁹ On the function of earlier prologues and epilogues, see Tiffany Stern, "'A Small-beer health to His Second Day': Playwrights, Prologues, and First Performances in the Early Modern Theatre," *Studies in Philology* 101, no.2 (Spring 2004): 172-199, doi: 10.1353/sip.2004.0010.

¹⁰⁰ Medina, Address, *New Yorker*, January 21, 1837, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

¹⁰¹ Bird, preface to *Nick of the Woods* (New York: Redfield, 1853), iii.

¹⁰² James Rees, *Dramatic Mirror and Literary Companion* (Philadelphia: Turner and Fisher, 1841-42), 191, American Periodicals Series, 1800-1850, ProQuest.

amateur (a point Katherine Newey underscores for British writers).¹⁰³ Dramatists finessed a professional image mid-way between crass materialism and aristocratic disinterest. Following decorum, the discourses veiled the materiality of their needs, aestheticizing or ennobling playwrights' strained situation, and allegorizing labor and pay.¹⁰⁴ To solicit support for G. W. Harby, a New Orleans newspaper asked the public to attend his benefit as reward for his "industry,"¹⁰⁵ the favorite noun for assiduous work. Though a newspaper approbation also described Medina as an "industrious girl,"¹⁰⁶ one of her own prologues instead adopted a pastoral, feminine metaphor, the gesture of tossing blossoms, asking reward for the playwright "who devotes her hours /To strew life's [illegible] path with fragrant flow'rs."¹⁰⁷ (Her writing abounded in such Romantic nature imagery.) Another "address," also reprinted in a New York newspaper, delivers a plea for "the poor author" through the figures of a married couple, who express material need by poetic trope: "Aid her, ye criticks, and assist, ye fair/Nor Doom the author to exist on Air."¹⁰⁸

As Medina's petition admits, playwrights depended on audience approbation to ensure recurring stagings of their plays, which would earn them something on which to exist, besides air or honor. The playwriting economy was deeply social. Paid partly by benefits (in the US), dramatists depended on the quality of actors' performances in those tailored prologues and in the play itself—and often they knew these very actors in person. In the eyes of a detractor, the "execrable" and "abominable" quality of the Bowery Theatre company could do no justice to Medina's writing (of a play before *Nick*): "Miss Medina, the gifted dramatist of the Bowery, took

¹⁰³ Kate [Katherine] Newey, "Women and the Theatre," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chap. 9.

¹⁰⁴ On labor tropes in fiction, see Michael Newbury, *Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁵ *Times Picayune* (New Orleans), March 10, 1838, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

¹⁰⁶ *New York Mirror*, February 2, 1836.

¹⁰⁷ Medina, Prologue, *New York Mirror*, March 12, 1836.

¹⁰⁸ Medina, Prologue.

a benefit Thursday; yet with the whole influence of her large body of friends, it was very little of a benefit—flat, stale and unprofitable.”¹⁰⁹ Regardless of its veracity, the passage conveys how, for relying on a “body of friends” among audiences, actors, and managers, the playwriting business was intensively interpersonal, perhaps more than writing for other vehicles. Actors affected its public presentation, while managers often determined its stage and financial success.¹¹⁰ Conducted socially, this small commodity exchange relied on the affective factors of respect and trust, which, though entwined with economics, cannot be reduced to it.

Decades later, the actor Joseph Proctor claimed that Medina had written the lead part for him (though his debut in it followed a year after the premiere).¹¹¹ The play apparently underwent two premieres, before and after a fire. The staggered premieres and the uncertain home-base of her *Nick* make it hard to discern which actors she shaped roles for—but other instances suggest that she molded parts for particular performers. The actor-proprietor James W. Wallack, according to his son’s memoir, noticed that Medina relocated the setting and reconfigured a highway robber character “into a sort of brigand hero” in her dramatization of Bulwer-Lytton’s *Ernest Maltravers*, “all of which she did to fit my father’s romantic style.”¹¹² Her *Ernest* also showcased roles for actor-manager Thomas Hamblin and his ingénue Louisa Missouri; she seems to have written for multiple key roles rather than in the centripetal, star-centered structure of some playwriting. “Writing for” a performer became a staple in theatre discourse, partly because the practice abounded, but also probably because of its powerful evocations, mutually enhancing both writer and actor. While preserving the writer’s status as author, the claim

¹⁰⁹ *Times Picayune* (NO), June 11, 1837, America’s Historical Newspapers, Readex.

¹¹⁰ On the relative efficacy of English managers earlier, see Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, “Playwrights’ Remuneration in Eighteenth-Century London,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 10, no. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1999): 3-90; on managers in this era, see, Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*.

¹¹¹ Advertisement, *Lowell Daily Citizen* (MA), April 13, 1868, America’s Historical Newspapers, Readex.

¹¹² Lester Wallack, *Memories of Fifty Years* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1889; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), 117.

attributed some a causal force to the “written for” actor, as if a vestige of aristocratic patronage.

Both Medina’s work conditions and her reputation were more socially complex than those of other *Nick* dramatists, foremost because she was a woman playwright (in an era when a small proportion of women worked in any public forum). Women playwrights were not envisioned as a class (as in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s infamous “scribbling women” epithet yet to come), and they were not necessarily denigrated explicitly for their sex—but they were always marked. While *playwright* and *dramatist* remained neutral labels, and Medina’s prologue identifies her as *author*, most references to women writers indexed sex and marital status in small lexical gestures: authoress, “a lady distinguished by the productions of her pen,” or the marital-status prefix, Miss Medina or Mrs. Hamblin.¹¹³ (Just before *Nick*, Medina had transitioned to Mrs. Hamblin in certain print presentations.) And gender did color responses to Medina’s work. A review of an 1840s revival of her *The Last Days of Pompeii* described it as “but a patch work, made up of pieces cut from the main garment, and stitched together with a lady like care...” to the point that one wished the novelist Bulwer-Lytton had dramatized it himself.¹¹⁴ The reviewer’s metaphor of feminine labor, sewing, underscores the inescapable gendering of a woman’s writing, perhaps more so when she handled a man’s novel. Since public writing by women incited attention to their social identity and reputation, it required their attentive navigation of public presentation, both live (in public deportment) and textual (in rhetoric).¹¹⁵ Contributing to a gentleman’s magazine edited by Edgar Allen Poe, Medina’s epistolary preface described her as a daunted outsider humbled by the masculine company, yet it went on—in stealth ambiguity—to suggest

¹¹³ *Gloucester Telegraph* (England), June 23, 1838, British Newspapers 1600-1900, Gale.

¹¹⁴ *Dramatic Mirror and Literary Companion* 2, no. 3, February 26, 1842, 21-2, American Periodicals Series, ProQuest.

¹¹⁵ On constraints of women playwriting in Britain, see Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin, ed., *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); on the public assessment of women writers (in other genres) see Susan Coultrap-McQuinn, *Doing Literary Business* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

that women's contributions were necessary: "never was there anything yet appropriated to lordly man that the hand of women was not needful to lighten and adorn."¹¹⁶ She suggests that even if needed, women added just light decoration, not heavy substance, though Medina's dramatizations actually wrought substantial reconfigurations.

While trafficking in men's writing could highlight gender difference, women writers may have dramatized men's novels partly to *circumvent* gender confines, specifically the segregations of sub-genre: perhaps borrowing men's fiction about masculine subjects—large casts, outdoor events, and mass violence—allowed women to enter masculine realms as writers while remaining feminine as social beings.¹¹⁷ (Though the subject warrants stronger scrutiny, a glance at playlists suggests that women rarely dramatized women's novels then, until women novelists surged in the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* era). Medina's dramatizations, all based on men's novels, portray large movements and groups of men not found in her short fiction, where heroines meet violence on the small, personal scale (one incinerates her home; one almost kills her brutal mate; and one does kill her maleficent mate as she herself dies).¹¹⁸ Boisterous male characters alleviate gloom in her dramatizations, as Ralph Stackpole does in *Nick*, but not in her stories. Her narrations unfold within small circumferences, within the recent past, in homes and other familiar spaces (not the Kentucky wilderness), involving a small set of characters surrounding a tragic heroine—while her dramatizations, which foreground one or two men (besides a heroine), travel to remote settings and depict larger-scale violence.

Besides gender, dramatists were associated with theatre, a link that accrued mixed effects.

¹¹⁶ Louisa Medina Hamblin, "Letter to the Editor," *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* 3, no. 5 (November, 1838), 325, accessed May 8, 2009, Google Books, www.books.google.com. The "letter" functions as a preface.

¹¹⁷ These gender strategies might be cast as "performative," a formulation I do not elaborate here.

¹¹⁸ Respectively, under changing surnames: Hamblin, "The Burial by Fire," *Ladies' Companion and Literary Expositor* 9, June, 1838, American Periodicals Series, ProQuest; Medina, "The Sister of Charity," in *Romantic Historian; a Series of Lights and Shadows, Elucidating American Annals* (Philadelphia: Hogan & Thompson, 1834), in *American Fiction 1774-1850* (Woodbridge, CT: Research Publications, n.d., ca. 1980s), microfilm, reel r-4, no. 2142-2154; Hamblin, "The Panorama of Life," *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* 3, no. 5, November, 1838.

The Bowery Theatre, where Medina forged her career, emanated paradoxical associations: as opulent and well-attended—thus propelling her reputation as a successful dramatizer—but also “scorned by the *bon ton* as plebian in taste and manners,” for the social composition of the audience (workers, Negroes, and prostitutes) and the aesthetic composition of the drama.¹¹⁹ Medina’s fiction and public promotion aimed to straddle that contradiction, to reach a level of *belles lettres* authorship while dramatizing melodramas—to be recognized as able to *write*, not merely *wright*, as Tracy Davis and Ellen Donkin distinguish the two.¹²⁰

In what seems paradoxical, the writer who was marked as a woman and who specialized in derivative playwriting was the *Nick* dramatizer who acquired the highest literary image, leaving the most traces of such striving. Put in current terminology (following Pierre Bourdieu), Medina seems to have been most thickly involved in the literary field, relative to the other two known *Nick* dramatists.¹²¹ Though she did not see her plays into print, her other works were published, including poetry, prologues, and fiction (and even her legal testimony),¹²² besides perhaps anonymous magazine columns (when journalists were rarely given by-lines). Her printed voice emanated erudition: her story epigraphs quoted Byron, Scott, and Shakespeare (whose plays women characters read in one story and in *Ernest Maltravers*), and they occasionally interwove foreign phrases. She projected intellectual agility, reporting an education in classic languages and mathematics; one of her stories hinges on a verbal parlor game, and her only cheerful short fiction climaxes at a chess match (between women).¹²³ Medina, or some advocate,

¹¹⁹ Rosemarie Bank, “Bowery Theatre Company,” in *American Theatre Companies 1749-1887*, ed. W. Durham (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 115.

¹²⁰ Davis and Donkin, *Women and Playwriting*, 7.

¹²¹ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, trans. R. Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹²² *Gloucester Telegraph* (England), June 23, 1838, British Newspapers, 1600-1900, Gale. The paper reprinted Medina’s court testimony exonerating Hamblin in the death of the actress Missouri (in Romantic rhetoric).

¹²³ Medina, “What’s my Thought Like?” *Monthly Traveller; or, Spirit of the Periodical Press* 7, October 1, 1836, accessed March 6, 2011, Google Books, www.books.google.com; Medina, “Chess Play,” *Rover* 1, no. 4, March 22,

sought to expose her work to audiences higher than the riff-raff of New York theatre pits, landing by-lines and mentions in respectable periodicals. The *Ladies' Companion* reported on her playwriting, even her pieces for the working-class venue, the Bowery Theatre, and even her works-in-progress; it excerpted a passage from her verse drama, *Il Maldelto*; it published her stories, and announced that she would be contributing articles. Thus her name recurred in both Theatre and Literary sections of the journal, projecting the cumulative image of a veritable author. Her reputed speed of writing, in her “frequently commencing and completing a finished play in a week” and adapting Shakespeare’s *Pericles* “in the incredible space of three days,” testified to skill, not slovenly hack-work,¹²⁴ when speed indexed skill or talent (a significance sometimes overlooked in histories of playwriting). Compared to a male rival’s effort, according to the manager Hamblin, her *Pericles* was faster and cheaper, as well as a better drama, implying that all three measures—speed, cost, and aesthetics—were conjoined in literary accomplishment.

Although she had not yet garnered a wide reputation for other genres, Medina’s print presence suggests a movement towards a *literary* oeuvre (again, while merely in her twenties).¹²⁵ Her fiction reached a modestly diverse array of vehicles. The *Southern Literary Messenger* printed her work near a review of Bird’s *Nick*; a fiction anthology (misleadingly titled *Romantic Historian*) included her “The Sister of Charity” near an excerpt from *Wacousta*, another novel she dramatized—yet it granted her, but not the male novelist, a by-line.¹²⁶ To complement her women readership from *The Ladies' Companion*, her story “The Panorama of Life” targeted men

1843, accessed April 3, 2011, Google Books, www.google.com. (The latter is possibly a misattribution, given its posthumous publication date and its uncharacteristic optimism.)

¹²⁴ *Ladies' Companion*, April 1837, 300.

¹²⁵ I use *oeuvre* heuristically, while aware of the concept’s “author function” obfuscations as highlighted by Michel Foucault. *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 24.

¹²⁶ Medina, “The Sister of Charity.” The unattributed excerpt is likely from John Richardson, *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy, A Tale of the Canadas* (London: T. Cadell, 1832), which Medina dramatized in 1833.

readers of *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*.¹²⁷ Magazine writing paid proportionally more than theatre writing, and thus provided another stream of income—but it also offered cultural capital, a literary reputation, or a testament to one's textual faculty. Medina's fictional oeuvre showcased an agility with the era's style and tropes, a sentimental ethos laced with the macabre, tendencies that resembled aspects of her dramatizations. Each storey centered on a young adult woman, almost always a victim: the parents inadequate; a heterosexual dyad with a man impossible, ineffective, or destructive; tribulations both internal and external, and a descent to madness and/or death. She incorporated this heroine in her last two dramatizations: Alice in *Ernest Maltravers* (a wrongdoer's virtuous daughter rejected, unjustly, by her upper-status beloved), and Telie in *Nick* (the ashamed renegade's daughter, rejected by and sacrificing her life for the upper-status Roland). That family model was echoed in Medina's purported life story, according to which she was raised by a European businessman father who, after privileging her with a "masculine" education, fell into financial ruin.¹²⁸ (Her actual life did fulfill the rest of the formula, when she died young of a murky ailment diagnosed as "apoplexy," but possibly the homicide by her husband-boss Hamblin.)¹²⁹

Medina is often identified as in-house dramatist for the Bowery Theatre. She did write steadily and solely for the company through the mid-1830s, to lucrative effect. While never an actress, she entered the theatre's economic machinery, buying partial ownership, stock or shareholding—a capitalist investment that could have supplemented her earnings from textual labor. But as if a character in one of her own plots, she lost that capital in the 1836 fire.¹³⁰ Despite her

¹²⁷ Hamblin, "The Panorama of Life." Perhaps Medina reached the magazine's editor Burton through Hamblin, since both men were northeast corridor British émigré actors. 22

¹²⁸ "The Drama," *Ladies' Companion*, April 1837, 300.

¹²⁹ *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), November 15, 1838, Nineteenth-Century US Newspapers, Gale.

¹³⁰ "Destruction of the Bowery Theatre," *Daily Commercial Bulletin* (St. Louis), October 10, 1836, 2, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

thick associations with the Bowery Theatre, it seems more accurate to say that she wrote for Thomas Hamblin, who as the Bowery manager (and stock-holder) saw her plays staged there during the middle 1830s. A longer magazine profile of Medina (possibly also *by* her) recounts an anecdote that implies this brokering, the one invoked above, in which Hamblin consigned to the renowned playwright John Howard Payne the adaptation of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, for which the accomplished writer asked five-hundred dollars. Whence:

The Bowery manager liked the piece, but the price he liked not at all, so he proposed the same subject to Miss Medina, and [...] she returned him a MSS., which, being both submitted to [British playwright] Sheridan Knowles, was pronounced infinitely superior in dramatic effect, and equal in composition to its high-priced rival.¹³¹

Apart from themes of writing skill, the anecdote positions Hamblin as broker to staging. Besides a writer's individual status as gendered, the mode of relationship affected his or her reputation as well as the commodity exchange of the playscript. Medina's bond with Hamblin was an unusual fusion of domestic, professional, and public. Purportedly, Medina had entered Hamblin's home as governess of his daughter and wrote a spate of plays in some undesignated domestic co-habitation with him; the diary-writer Joseph Ireland called her Hamblin's "housekeeper"¹³² (not necessarily pejoratively). Soon before *Nick*, she was presented as *Mrs. Hamblin* in print—a status perhaps legal, though possibly common-law or merely a public front (and reports of them having children are not consistent).¹³³ Though men would write for women superiors later on, and women would manager theatres that staged *Nick*, there is no sign of a playwright writing

¹³¹ "The Drama," *Ladies' Companion*, April 1837, 300.

¹³² Joseph Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage from 1750-1860* (New York: Samuel French, 1866; repr. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 245.

¹³³ For a synthesized biography, see Lopez-Rodriguez, "Louisa Medina, Uncrowned Queen of Melodrama," in *Women's Contribution to Nineteenth-Century American Theatre*, ed. Miriam Lopez-Rodriguez and Maria Dolores Narbona-Carrion (Valencia, Spain: Departamento de Filologia Anglesa i Alemanya, Universitat de València, 2004), 29-42. However, data about the marriage's legitimacy, the cause of her death, and off-spring remain cloudy.

Nick for a woman.¹³⁴ Medina's writing, that is, was the only instance when sexuality and marriage (of some kind) were integral in the genesis of a *Nick* play—which affected the writer's access to theatres, her earnings, her public reception, and her version's long-term reputation.

Gender incurred both privilege and prescription, as Davis and Donkin find in nineteenth-century British theatre, and so did women's marriage.¹³⁵ Hamblin may have first invited Medina to write for theatre (she had published poems), and probably served as broker of some kind, conduit to the theatres in which he acted. (A memoir recalled him, not her, approaching the manager Wallack about staging *Ernest Maltravers*.)¹³⁶ His mediation allowed Medina to associate with theatre while maintaining respectability (when theatre, in Davis and Donkin's phrase, was "toxic" to women's social standing.)¹³⁷ For good or ill, this arrangement would have meant continuity of the broker; G. W. Harby, in contrast, tried his *Nick* on two or three actors and exchanged other plays with yet other buyers. Medina's plays were staged steadily in the Bowery Theatre while Hamblin oversaw it, but she seems to have been unmoored from any home-base after 1837, when fire decimated the theatre and Hamblin moved elsewhere—the period during which she dramatized *Nick of the Woods*. During that limbo her old and new plays were staged in other theatres; there comes a lull in notices of her plays. According to her rival Allen, he and she dramatized the same Bulwer-Lytton novel in hopes of staging by Wallack (who chose his version).¹³⁸ She apparently lost her "in-house" position at the Bowery, if she ever did hold it.

Socially, the bond with Hamblin had mixed effects. Marriage, real or pretended, provided

¹³⁴ UK women *Nick* managers: Miss Lina Edwin, noted in *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin), July 20, 1872; "Directress" Miss Marie Henderson, of New Elephant & Castle Theatre, noted in *Era* (London) August 17, 1879, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale.

¹³⁵ Davis and Donkin, *Women and Playwriting*, 5.

¹³⁶ Wallack, *Fifty Years*, 87.

¹³⁷ Davis and Donkin, *Women and Playwriting*, 7. I extend their description of England to the US.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Seilhamer, *An Interviewer's Album*, 121.

the only social improvement visible in a woman's name, as is clear when juxtaposing Mrs. Hamblin, with *Dr.* Bird, an enhancement derived from education and profession. Haines's and Harby's names were sometimes elevated by the suffix, *esq.*, "esquire" connoting "gentleman" (distinct from the narrow denoting of land-owning or lawyer in other eras). The men's intimate partnerships meanwhile remained invisible, neither helping nor hindering their public professional identities. In one obituary, Medina was identified, conventionally, merely as the wife of Hamblin.¹³⁹ Compared to Harby and Haines, Medina garnered a louder *social* reputation, a product of her association with Hamblin, whose public identity projected her as a social figure, not only in New York City but also across theatre networks. Hamblin's scandals generally related to sexual partners (real or perceived)—an acrimonious divorce, a wife mysteriously dying, a suspected actress lover, and during *Nick's* first year, the death of his protégé for whom Medina had tailored a lead role in *Ernest Maltravers*. These episodes were broadcast in public texts in and far from Manhattan, fusing Medina's drama production with her dubious propriety (in a pamphlet, a broadside, and perhaps more discretely in Rees's writings).¹⁴⁰ That sullied image would soon be extended by Medina's own mysterious death at the end of *Nick's* first year on stage. At the time of her drafting *Nick*, the discourses had yet to escalate so drastically, but still, they would have pressed upon on her reputation as a playwright.

George Washington Harby

Like Medina, George Washington Harby (1797-1862) differed from the larger stream of US playwrights who were, according to melodrama historian Rahill, "hack journalists, actors, and theatrical handymen—and amateurs,"¹⁴¹ though he differed from her, too, in location, social

¹³⁹ *New-Yorker*, November 17, 1838, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

¹⁴⁰ Summarized in W. W. Clapp, *A Record of the Boston Stage* (Boston: James Monroe, 1853; repr. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 352.

¹⁴¹ Rahill, *World of Melodrama*, 227.

position, and professional position as a playwright. In New Orleans, when not teaching school, Harby seems to have worked as a freelance playwright (though that was not their term), without a steady broker or links to one theatre. Even when Harby was the oldest of these three playwrights, *Nick* was probably only his second theatre piece and, although he would live the longest, he wrote fewer works than the others, totaling nine or twelve, not dozens.¹⁴² Like Medina he drew from a range of subjects, the Indian maiden (*Tutoona*), the orient (*Mohamed*), foreign lives (Russian), and European history (*Azzo*), most of which were not dramatizations of novels (or not explicitly so). Harby was the least prominent writer of the playwrights related to *Nick*, making a modest public impression. Having grown up within the relatively large Jewish community in Charleston, South Carolina, he relocated to New Orleans. He perhaps also relocated his religion: his Judaism is not apparent in cotemporaneous records of him. (The selection of the *Merchant of Venice* for one of his theatre benefits is in this vein intriguing, but too complex to decipher here.) His elder brother Isaac Harby remained in their community of origin, in both the geographic and sectarian senses, yet the two underwent similar careers, running schools and writing plays. Isaac Harby, though, saw greater renown then and later precisely because of his overt religious involvements.¹⁴³

If not renowned, G. W. Harby was championed by at least one prolific commentator, the fellow playwright James Rees, in the periodical he edited, the *Dramatic Mirror*, and in his groundbreaking, eccentric *The Dramatic Authors of America*, a chatty inventory of domestic playwrights. In the latter, Rees extolled Harby's version of *Nick*, counterfactually, as the most

¹⁴² George Washington Harby's three extant plays: *Nick* in the Clifton Barrett collection, Small Special Collections, University of Virginia (which I viewed); a typescript copy of *Stefania* in Rare Books and Misc. Library Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; and *Tutoona*, possibly held by, though not visibly catalogued in, the Jewish Heritage Collection, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston (SC).

¹⁴³ Digital searches about Isaac Harby (2010) retrieved works on southern Jews and US Jewish dramatists.

popular one (though he buried the praise in a footnote to R. M. Bird's entry),¹⁴⁴ while minimizing Medina's accomplishments. Rees wrote that in New Orleans Harby "enjoys a high reputation as a scholar, and purely classical writer."¹⁴⁵ Although that classical erudition is difficult to spot in his surviving *Nick*—as Daniel Gerould points out, one hardly needed classics to write melodrama¹⁴⁶—Harby was undoubtedly cultivated, educated by formal schooling and the autodidact reading practiced in his milieu. This "stock" of American men, according to an early 1900s historian, "raised on their Addison and Pope....read their Greek, knew their classics, recited their Shakespeare backwards," and were preoccupied with theatre as a social-cultural influence.¹⁴⁷ A school teacher, Harby would have been deemed expert in oration, penmanship, and literature—skills that converged in the material and rhetorical project of writing melodrama.

Harby allegedly handed his *Nick* manuscript to one actor, C. B. Parsons. A theatre column reminded readers who Harby was, before announcing this transaction:

Mr George H Harby, favorably known to the community as the author of Tutoona, has dramatized, with some happy alterations, Dr Bird's novel of "Nick of the Woods," and has placed it in the hands of Mr. Parsons for performance. This gentleman will sustain the part of the principal hero of the piece, and, we are told, will bring out the drama in a handsome style.¹⁴⁸

According to Rees, even after the play was produced several times, Parsons did not compensate Harby in a "handsome style," according to the note quoted earlier: "as yet, the author has received nothing for writing it, but the honour of doing so."¹⁴⁹ Playwriting was normally constrained by the relationships of exchange, given dramatists' subordinate position. In playwriting for stars, the actors controlled the transaction, along with the fate of the play.

¹⁴⁴ Rees, *Dramatic Authors*, 30. The quasi-alphabetical entries digress into excerpts, letters, and commentaries.

¹⁴⁵ Rees, *Dramatic Authors*, 89. Punctuation and case in original.

¹⁴⁶ Daniel Gerould, introduction to *American Melodrama*, ed. Daniel Gerould (New York: PAG, 1983), 8.

¹⁴⁷ Montrose J. Moses, *The American Dramatist* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1911; repr. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), 80. The quotation refers to Isaac Harby and kindred men.

¹⁴⁸ "Green-Room Intelligence," *Spirit of the Times*, January 6, 1838, American Historical Newspapers, Readex.

¹⁴⁹ Rees, "Biographical Sketch of Charles Booth Parson," *Dramatic Mirror* 1, no. 24, January 22, 1842, 191 n.

Perhaps Harby suffered for his inexperience in such negotiations, but Bird too had been disappointed by the star Edwin Forrest even after multiple exchanges, in relation to not only staging but also publishing; the star later rebuffed Bird's son's petition for heir's rights, allegedly saying, "These plays are exclusive property, by the right of purchase and for many years beyond the law of copyright."¹⁵⁰ Forrest's other prize winner, John Augustus Stone, underwent similar disputes (after which he committed suicide). These recorded conflicts between dramatist and employer involved *men* writers, a pattern perhaps explained indirectly by the literary historian Susan Coultrap-McQuinn, who argues that women writers enjoyed an advantage, relative to their men counterparts: they could translate their subordinated social position into a savvy ability to negotiate from the lower position (under men literary editors)—an advantage-to-disadvantage theory of agency.¹⁵¹

If Harby was denied his flat-fee for *Nick*, he had the chance to earn a sum from a scheduled fourth-night benefit at Russell's Theatre. The notice for his benefit converted the star's misdeed into Harby's virtue, explaining that the playwright had fallen into hard times because of his own "generosity."¹⁵² Soon the *Dramatic Mirror* reported that Harby was mailing his *Nick* to Forrest, the Noble-Indian impersonator who had frustrated Bird¹⁵³—a reminder that playwrights *could* regain control of their manuscripts (or secure a copy), though they usually lost rights after the initial hand-over. It also remembers mail as another conduit of playwriting business. Yet Rees later reported that the script had landed in the hands of the north-eastern tragedian, Edmon

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Quinn, editor's note to *A City Looking Glass*, xix. Most genealogies of Bird's *Nick* rehash his own explanation that he wrote against dishonest representations of the idealized Indian by *novelists* such as James Fenimore Cooper. This overlooks a more blatant, personal target: the dishonest transactions (refusing money and copyright) by the *actor* who represented the "noble savage" on stage, Edwin Forrest.

¹⁵¹ Coultrap-McQuinn, *Doing Literary Business*, 38.

¹⁵² *Times Picayune* (NO), March 10, 1838.

¹⁵³ *Dramatic Mirror*, December 25, 1841.

Conner, who played *Nick* in a theatre also associated with Medina, Wallack's National¹⁵⁴ (the copy much later reached the University of Virginia collection, and appears in appendix A to C).

Harby's was the only known version written in the South and for a Southern audience, and the particularities of place did leave imprints on playwriting. Scholars have interpreted a regional resonance in the play and in Ralph specifically, reading him as a *southern* figure—that is, deducing that audiences received him as regional kin (an affinity considered positive in these analyses).¹⁵⁵ Yet Harby's public was hardly Kentucky. New Orleans, after all, had its French dramatic precedent and an elegant venue in which to mount the play (unlike the newly ratified Arkansas, the Republic of Texas, and Mississippi flanking its borders). The *Dramatic Mirror* recalled Harby delivering the oration at the cornerstone ceremony of the city's new theatre building, an index of his literati role as orator, and of some association with local theatre. The major cities of the South did constitute nodes on the national theatre circuit, even as they comprised an intra-regional local network. One distinction of late 1830s New Orleans was the monopoly hold on all major theatre by one proprietor, James Caldwell,¹⁵⁶ though there is no sign of Harby's direct transaction with him, and little discussion of what effects such a monopoly engendered, as there was such discussion about the duopoly in England.

John Thomas Haines

After the versions by Medina and Harby, all extant nineteenth-century versions of *Nick* emerged in England. The third known *Nick* playwright, John Thomas Haines (ca. 1799-1843) was an English stage actor who wrote plays. Generationally, Haines fell between the Americans:

¹⁵⁴ Rees, *Dramatists of America*, 30; "Robert Montgomery Bird," *Nineteenth Century Literary Criticism*, ed. Laurie Lanzen Harris (Detroit: Gale Research, 1981), 1: 80-91; Thomas A. Brown, *A History of the New York Stage from the First Performance in 1732 to 1901* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1903), I: 251. The *NCLC* says Conner "widely played" in Harby's version; Rees said Conner held Harby's script; Brown recalled him playing *Nick* in New York in 1839—though the show is elsewhere identified as Medina's version.

¹⁵⁵ Charles S. Watson, *The History of Southern Drama* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1997), 53-63. Watson finds Ralph's sylvan features more successful in the Westward south (i.e., further from north-eastern refinements).

¹⁵⁶ Lloyd Morris, *Curtain Time* (New York: Random House, 1953), 68.

younger than Harby, he began writing and publishing before either of them (in the 1820s), saw more titles into print, and ultimately spanned a longer writing career. Though Medina's pace was probably swifter, Haines lived long enough that his writing years quadrupled hers. A few of his plays travelled US circuits, reaching the Bowery Theatre (where the celebrity Madame Celeste impersonated an Arab boy in his *The French Spy*). As an actor, Haines may have written for his home company, though this is not clear: in the late 1830s his *Nick* and other works appeared in the Royal Victoria (formerly Royal Coburg, later "Old Vic"),¹⁵⁷ but others appeared at the Surrey Theatre (and yet others in other theatres).

Haines wrote under a system that legally segregated "legitimate drama" from popular (musical and physical) entertainment, granting two houses (Covent Garden and Drury Lane) exclusive rights or patent to textual performance, thus relegating the lower genres to other venues. Around the same time that Haines's opera *Amilie* appeared in one of the Royal patent houses, his *Nick* went to a house whose name merely evoked monarchy, the Royal Victoria.¹⁵⁸ Despite the legal demarcations, the practical boundary was blurred by theatres transgressing in both directions, bringing melodrama to the literary stages and Shakespeare to the minor stages.¹⁵⁹ Legalizing common practice, Parliament dissolved the duopoly in 1843, between the 1840 and 1844 anonymous *Nick* versions. (Even then, the loosening would have little effect on *Nick*, which, if it appeared in houses called Theatres Royal in Dublin and Glasgow and English provinces, still steered around the reputed legitimate stages within London.)¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of the English Drama, 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 4: 231.

¹⁵⁸ In London, *Nick* premiered in Royal Victoria (to which it later returned), also appearing at the Pavilion, Great New Standard Theatre, City of London Theatre, Elephant and Castle, and Britannia; the 1858 equestrian *Nick* went to the amphitheater; the later minstrel burlesque circuited several London-area music halls.

¹⁵⁹ Dewey Ganzell "Patent Wrongs and Patent Theatres," *PMLA* 76, no. 4 (September 1961): 384-96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/460622>.

¹⁶⁰ *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), January 13, 1842; *Era* (London), December 3, 1876, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale.

Dramatizing *Nick* was just one instance of the normal, pervasive practice of writing from prior sources, which, at a larger reach, can be seen as merely an overt instance of the intertextuality that constitutes any act of writing, as expressed by recent literary theories.¹⁶¹ Bird, considered an original writer, consulted history books for his plays and novels, and grafted the Kentucky story onto a European Romantic narrative framework. Though specializing in dramatizing novels, Medina allegedly also re-worked plays by Eugene Scribe and Shakespeare—a intra-genre borrowing then classified as *adaptation*, distinct from inter-genre *dramatizing* (a distinction blurred in some recent analyses). Haines may have consulted other plays, or drawn from a common pool of imagery, as his *Wizard of the Wave* title echoed J. S. Jones's *Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea*. While *Nick* was his only explicit dramatization of a novel, Haines did dramatize other genres: a serial story (*Jacob Faithful; or, The Life of a Thames Waterman*); a William Hogarth etching (for *Life of a Woman*); and ballad lyrics (*Alice Grey* and *My Poll*). Though none of the *Nick* playwrights wrote music, as did Bird, Haines collaborated with a composer, writing an opera libretto (*Amilie*).

As a frontier tale, *Nick* was a one-off for Haines, who tended toward other sub-genres, settings, and heroes, predominantly depicting his own people in recent eras.¹⁶² He revisited one particular sub-genre, the nautical play; his protagonists belonged to humbler classes, notably sailors or laborers (*The Factory Boy*). Unlike his US counterparts, Haines trafficked in light material, burletta and farce, though not the higher tier of comedy. In sub-genre labels, Haines's

¹⁶¹ For re-conceptualizing plagiarism as “intertextuality,” see Laura J. Rosenthal. *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹⁶² Haines's oeuvre is culled from: *English Drama and Theatre 1800-1900*, ed. L. W. Conolly and J. P. Wearing (Detroit, MI: Gale, 1977); Lord Chamberlain's Plays, British Library Catalogue; Joanne Shattock, ed., *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, vol. 4 1800-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Allardyce Nicoll, *Early Nineteenth Century Drama, 1800-1850*, vol 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); and Lawrence S. Thompson, *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Drama, a Selective Bibliography* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1975).

Nick was sub-titled “a Melo-Drama,” while Medina’s earned the heftier label, “A Drama,”¹⁶³ a difference perhaps related to his having condensed the story into fewer acts. Haines was more a journeyman playwright, less a *literary* dramatist or society figure—or so it seems, not due to the dramatic quality of his *Nick*, but to the tenor of his public impression. Never publishing in other genres, Haines is not mentioned in press accounts for his orations, works-in-progress, education, or scandal. That is, he was not represented as a social and literary figure (at least as far as sources reveal). As an actor, he likely came from a modest tier: playwrights with (or pretending) social pedigree did not act, generally speaking.¹⁶⁴ When he was represented in a printed portrait, it was as an *actor*, not a playwright—living dramatists were almost never depicted visually as writers; their own published plays, if adorned with anyone’s image, instead showed an actor, a dead writer, or characters in a scene. Haines’s actor portrait, issued in the fashionable form of “tinsel portrait” (a print decorated by the consumer with metallic chads and other stuff),¹⁶⁵ shows him performing his knight role in a dramatization of Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, which he did not write.¹⁶⁶

Robert Montgomery Bird as Playwright

The dramatic work of Robert Montgomery Bird (1806-1854) supplements this survey of late inkwell-era playwriting. A decade before *Nick*, Bird began public writing in the genre of drama, ultimately finishing six plays. He had written for a celebrated actor, Edwin Forrest, through several arrangements: Forrest sponsored a prize contest for an American dramatist

¹⁶³ Nicoll, *Early Nineteenth Century Drama*, 322-3. Nicoll identified both Medina’s and the anonymous 1844 version as drama, indicated as (d), but Haines’s as melodrama, (md).

¹⁶⁴ Prominent playwrights around Medina’s era—e.g., “Philadelphia School” writers R.M. Bird and G. H. Boker—did not act.

¹⁶⁵ Tinsel portrait (London [?]: n.d.), Victoria and Albert Museum website, accessed May 9, 2010, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O158313/tinsel-print-print-john-thomas-haines-as-brian>. The V & A site offers the most extensive account the tinsel genre I have found.

¹⁶⁶ On related print-theatre genres, see Julie S. Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

(though depicting any subject), which Bird won (*Pelopidas*); Bird wrote by some kind of contract or commission (the Roman *Gladiator* and the Inca story *Oralloso*); and Forrest assigned Bird to revise another playwright's prize play (John Stone's noble Indian tragedy *Metamora*).¹⁶⁷ While still playwriting for Forrest, Bird wrote three novels, but in the wake of disputes over pay and copyright, he forsook drama for fiction. In his wry rationale, fiction would "immortalize one's pocket sooner."¹⁶⁸ After writing his fourth novel, *Sheppard Lee*, the first on an American subject, he began *Nick of the Woods*, intending to complete a Kentucky trilogy.¹⁶⁹

Dramatizing Novels

In 1837, Bird's two-volume novel was published in Philadelphia, while in London it was reformatted into three volumes, assigned a new sub-title, and prefaced by an editor. These imprints were distributed along the respective regional networks, which in the US moved north to Medina's New York, and west to major cities, reaching Harby in New Orleans.¹⁷⁰ The playwrights had occasion to notice the novel through other print matter: bookseller's catalogues and classified advertisements (often near theatre ads); newspaper's excerpts;¹⁷¹ and book reviews. A book review in the *Southern Literary Messenger* likened the novel to Walter Scott's work, and un-clairvoyantly assessed it as *not* dramatic.¹⁷² Haines's printed sub-title, "or, the Altar of Revenge!" came not from Bird's novel, but from the British edition's preface by William

¹⁶⁷ Justin R. Wert, "Robert Montgomery Bird," in *Nineteenth Century American Fiction Writers*, vol. 202 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Kent P. Ljungquist (Detroit: Gale Research Co, 1999), chap. 5.

¹⁶⁸ Morris, *Curtain Time*, 89; Bird, quoted in Wert, "Bird," *DLB* 202: 36.

¹⁶⁹ Cecil Williams, "Robert Montgomery Bird's Plans for Novels on the Frontier," *American Literature* 21, no. 3 (November 1949): 321-324, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOHost, ISSN 0002-9831.

¹⁷⁰ Bird, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay, a Tale of Kentucky*, 2 vol. (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1837); Bird, *Nick of the Woods: a Story of Kentucky*, 3 vol., ed. W. H. Ainsworth (London: Richard Bentley, 1837).

¹⁷¹ *The Times Picayune* (NO), April 21, 1837.

¹⁷² Review of *Nick of the Woods*, *Southern Literary Messenger* 3, no. 4 (April, 1837), 254-257, accessed March 7, 2007, Making of America Journal Articles, University of Michigan, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/>. The same journal soon published Medina's only theatre-themed story, "Olive Etherington, a Tale," *Southern Literary Messenger* 3, no. 9 (September 1837).

Ainsworth.¹⁷³ Dramatizing playwrights *handled* the source novel: they acquired a hard-bound copy from book-sellers or by mail or circulating libraries, or were handed it by the employer assigning them the job. They fingered the pages and perhaps marked them with notes, like the novelist Herman Melville marking a Shakespeare play¹⁷⁴—albeit in the other direction, and perhaps more in modes practical than conceptual. As the theory of paratexts surmises,¹⁷⁵ writers’ interpretation could have been inflected by prefaces (and US playwrights would have encountered Bird’s own preface). Dramatists were also influenced by watching theatre. The theatre historian Allardyce Nicoll identified Haines’s version as a derivative of Medina’s; though unlikely in this instance, Nicoll is right that subsequent dramatists could re-work prior playscripts (adapting), rather than consult the novel directly (dramatizing).¹⁷⁶ At the level of textual labor, all three *Nick* dramatizers handled the same materials used by novelists: ink-dipped, self-sharpened quill pens and handmade, rag-based paper. That is, dramatization, as writing, was not itself re-mediation of a novel—it shared the medium—but rather a means for the novel’s remediation in theatre (a distinction sometimes conflated in media analyses). These small materials and acts that I highlight, though, elicited no visible comment then, given their unremarkable everyday quality, a point revisited in the next chapter.

Nick of the Woods was bound to be dramatized—but not only, or primarily, because of its particular story. In quantitative terms, the book market did not offer a bounty of new stories to choose from. A new novel (to stress the obvious) offered *novelty*, which functioned as a kind of value-added for a theatre. In the close cluster of theatres in one district in Lower Manhattan, and among minor theatres in London, competition drove the need for distinction—for an appealing

¹⁷³ “Nathan has set up, as it were, an altar to Revenge.” W. H. Ainsworth, editor’s preface to *Nick of the Woods*, viii.

¹⁷⁴ F. O. Matthiessen mentions Melville’s annotations in *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 187.

¹⁷⁵ Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*.

¹⁷⁶ Nicoll, *Early Nineteenth Century*, 4: 322. To me, Haines’s text seems too distinct to be derivative of Medina’s.

difference relative to recent shows or neighboring shows. Around the first 1839 production of Medina's *Nick*, for example, came the unharmonious assortment of the verse *Hernani*, the comic *Gulliver in Lilliput* (enacted by dwarves), and a spectacle "Frost Spirit and the Sun God."¹⁷⁷ Theatres used other tactics of differentiation, such as celebrity actors, or high-technology effects, or live animals, such as the horses and dog in the 1858 equestrian *Jibbenainosay*. Relative to those expensive devices, using novels was affordable, since, given the prevailing standards of textual property, theatres were not obligated to compensate—or even to acknowledge—the novelist. A recent novel, moreover, had already garnered publicity, a kind of entertainment credibility. Structurally, although dramatizing does involve an intricate transformation, novels proffer ready-made stories—plots, dialogue, and a matrix of characters—which expedite the invention phase of playwriting. Expedition was paramount, given the economy of entertainment that required multiple shows per night and short runs for any play—a perpetual cascade of new, distinct, or unique performances. Bird's *Nick of the Woods*, that is, emanated values related to theatre economics, even apart from its particular content.

Dramatizing was also affordable *culturally*, as an instance of legitimate borrowing of other writers' inventions (notwithstanding some novelists' complaints). These legitimacies change across historical and cultural contexts.¹⁷⁸ Although occasionally derided as derivative hacks by novelists and critics,¹⁷⁹ dramatizers did receive public acknowledgement as authors—borrowing plots did not automatically diminish their achievement. Print promotion, in press notices and playbills, conveyed an implicit layering of authorship, for which we lack adequate terminology

¹⁷⁷ Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage*, 249.

¹⁷⁸ On the nuances of legitimacy for the early modern era, see Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists*; and Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660-1710* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), chap. 2.

¹⁷⁹ On the Charles Dickens-William T. Moncrieff dispute over dramatizations of Dickens' novels, see Cox, *Adaptations*, 121-162.

(though actors or producers have been called co-authors by recent scholars trying to capture this layering, that designation does not represent the conception at the time). In England, *Nick* came from “the pen of Mr Haines,” not Bird.¹⁸⁰ (Although the erasure harkens to aristocratic tradition of a writer’s self-erasure in anonymity, which Bird rehearsed for his first novel, by the time of *Nick* he was using his by-line.) Playbills of Joseph Proctor’s later productions named both writers: “Miss Medina’s celebrated Dramitization [sic] of Dr. Bird’s great American novel of that title,”¹⁸¹ even as both writers’ names were dwarfed by the towering typeface of the star’s name.

Of course, *Nick* was appealing for its specific features, too, especially its American identity: the uniquely American scenario of post-Revolution frontier conflict, articulated by an established, home-grown, upper-class writer, Dr. Bird. Like gender, nationality was rarely ignored by literary commentators. In the post-colonial cultural phase, intellectuals in both nations wondered about the quality of US writing, which primed a curiosity about new American fiction. In the US theatre sphere, some tiers of audiences expressed interest in domestic work. Years before the Astor Riots (catalyzed by a rivalry between an American and an English actor), a New York mayor recorded its foreshadow: in the Bowery Theatre, a visiting English actor maligned the US in a curtain speech; the audience raised havoc; Hamblin waved a US flag to declare his allegiance (to little avail, facing the throng of furious patriots).¹⁸² Renovating the Bowery following a fire, he renamed it, “The American Theatre,” a re-birth Medina commemorated in another address. Since she did not appear on stage, Medina’s own foreign upbringing provoked little strife (no comment even referred to an accent), but generally, nationality was noted in

¹⁸⁰ *Era* (London), May 5, 1839, British Newspapers, 1600-1900, Gale.

¹⁸¹ Playbill, *Nick of the Woods*, Portland Theatre, Portland, ME, May 11, 1861, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

¹⁸² Entry July 9, 1834, *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851*, ed. Bayard Tuckerman (New York: Dodd Mead, 1889), accessed April 8, 2009, Internet Archive, <http://www.archive.org/details/diaryphiliphone02tuckgoog>.

cultural production. A puff piece described Medina as “the most spirited and successful of our *American* dramatists.”¹⁸³ Though Medina, as well as Harby, continued to traffic in foreign material, their public was ready for a dramatization of a novel by an American writer, about US history, with perceptibly American hallmarks—the frontier, a Yankee, and Indians, if not also a Negro servant. But American plays drew audiences in Britain too, for many of the dramatic qualities iterated above, perhaps with foreign exoticism substituting for cultural nationalism. Theatre and books circuits were inflected but not determined by nation state boundaries.

Bird’s specific story did lend itself to theatre trends, as suggested by its synopsis (recounted on page 66, above). The somber gravity of a menaced virgin, a wronged young couple, and a mysterious assassin is alleviated by a boisterous woodsman and a cowardly northeasterner and Negro. The chain of successive threats, attacks, and abductions supplied substance for a drama full of what the British editor described as “fearful adventure, hair-breadth escapes, and profound mystery,” or, in a reviewer’s terms, “stirring events, striking incidents, and imposing *tableau*.”¹⁸⁴ For erudition, the setting invoked history, balancing amusement with “equally instructive description” of frontier conflicts,¹⁸⁵ and a kind of proto-ethnography of exotic Native American men. (Though some British commentators, including the novel’s English editor, questioned Bird’s antipathetic portrait, US writers would long describe as accurate—and all dramatizations reproduced it.)

How to Dramatize Novels

Comments about Medina explained the task of dramatizing as “no ordinary difficulty.”¹⁸⁶ Quantitatively, it required “compressing a novel of two volumes, and in some thirty chapters,

¹⁸³ “Theatricals,” *Ladies’ Companion*, June 1837, 100-2. (Emphasis added).

¹⁸⁴ Ainsworth, preface to *Nick of the Woods*, v; *Era* (London), May 5, 1839.

¹⁸⁵ Ainsworth, preface to *Nick*, v.

¹⁸⁶ “The Bowery,” *New-York Mirror* 13, no. 36, March 5, 1836, 286, American Periodical Series, ProQuest.

into a three act drama, at the same time preserving the continuity of the events, and the congruity of the character.”¹⁸⁷ *Nick*, with thirty-six chapters, and a fundamentally in-congruous character, required thoughtful translation. According to a flattering article, Medina understood a kind of comparative reception theory across genres, recognizing a scene that “long pages of elaborate description presents to the reader,” like Bird’s opening exposition on Kentucky statehood, could fail as a “picture” presented to an audience.¹⁸⁸ Harby and Haines reduced Bird’s first six chapters into one scene. Bird’s narrative climaxes at the victorious battle, yet, despite acknowledging that the betrothed couple’s “deliverance” marks “our story having arrived at its end,”¹⁸⁹ the narrator goes on to summarize the fates of other characters—Ralph’s transfer to riverboat work, Telie’s (dull) marriage, and Nathan’s unresolved pathos. While they end in varying ways, all the plays peak at Nathan’s triumphant vengeance, which practically upstages the couple’s reuniting, while they uniformly ignore Bird’s aftermath, with its unresolved pathos of Nathan’s isolation.

Generally, critics and theatre operatives recognized dramatizing as a skill, not a simple transference from book to play. They judged it by particular, though often unspoken, gauges. Typically, commentators praised fidelity to the source text. For a London reviewer, Haines’s dramatization succeeded because it “departed from text on only few exceptions, only for stage effect,”¹⁹⁰ that is, to meet the demands of the theatre medium. (One of those departures was likely the trap-door placed, improbably, in a rude frontier hovel.) A counter-view located the skill in *transforming* a novel, expressed in an extended magazine profile of Medina’s work. For her upcoming dramatizing of the orientalist novel *Giafar*, “the subject will, we should think,

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ “The Drama,” *Ladies’ Companion*, April 1837, 300. This article profiles Medina (who perhaps also wrote it).

¹⁸⁹ Bird, *Nick of the Woods*, Robert Montgomery Bird, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay, a Tale of Kentucky*, (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1837) repr. ed. Curtis Dahl (Albany, NY: New College and University Press, 1967), 341.

¹⁹⁰ *Era* (London), May 5, 1839.

require much alteration and addition to fit it for the drama”; the success of her past *Norman Leslie* and *Lafitte* derived from “her fervid fancy and effective alterations,” and that agility stood out in comparison: “Indeed, remembering as we do, how poorly any of Sir Walter Scott’s exquisite novels have ever been portrayed upon the stage, we ascribe the success of Miss Medina’s plays wholly to the *liberties she takes with the authors.*”¹⁹¹ (Scott dramatizations abounded.)¹⁹² After *Nick*, promotion of Medina’s *Ernest Maltravers* boasted that she barely followed the novel, “all the striking incidents and connecting links of the plot being supplied by the dramatist herself.”¹⁹³ But those same liberties were bemoaned by the conservative *Knickerbocker*, whose reviewer noted that Medina, “merely taking the hint from the novel, has worked up from her own imagination” a piece that glorified vice. More generally, the review impugned “the Bowery style” for having eclipsed “chaste and classical” drama that inculcated ethical behavior.¹⁹⁴ Like theatre in general, dramatizing was understood to reflect and affect morality, as well as to require fluency in literature and theatre.

Dramatization merged two transformations: the dramatizer crossed *genres* (fiction to drama), and wrote toward crossing *media* (text to theatre). The transformation from fiction to drama, and from “page to stage,” is embodied in the structure of drama format, the conventional indicators that distinguish ontological kinds of text: character label (or “speech prefix”), stage direction, dialogue, and section divisions (act/scene). In placement, letter-style, and punctuation, these are highly *visual*, rather than linguistically symbolic, signals. This visual dimension of the text renders it recognizable as drama, and functional as workaday text for actors and operatives—so basic it is noticed only by neophytes and outsiders, or highlighted by avant-garde

¹⁹¹ *Ladies’ Companion*, April 1837, 300. (Emphasis added).

¹⁹² For analysis of dramatizations of Walter Scott novels, see Cox, *Reading Adaptations*, chap. 2-3.

¹⁹³ *New York Mirror*, April 14, 1838, 334-5, American Periodical Series, ProQuest.

¹⁹⁴ *Knickerbocker New-York Monthly Magazine*, May 1838, 475, American Periodicals, ProQuest.

experiments, while taken for granted by artists and scholars. While the playwright used these structures for all plays, dramatizing novels required that they *translate* from fiction's format into drama format—reconfiguring not only ideas, or “shades of character,” but arrangements of marks on the page, legible to theatre workers, according to prevailing conventions. Drama format was a loose repertoire rather than a fixed system, so playwrights and copyists did not use format consistently even within one script.¹⁹⁵

Dramatizing Characters

Dramatizing rendered stories for particular casts, in gender, quantity and type or role, or “line of business.”¹⁹⁶ In quantity, Bird's novel involved a roster more male than female, suitable for theatre companies comprised twice as many actors as actresses (the Bowery had listed nineteen men to ten women).¹⁹⁷ At the level of character, Bird's novel offered several pronounced male figures. Nathan would suit the tragedian, Ralph the comic, Roland the handsome young man, and Emperor the black-face minstrel, besides two villains and an expandable set of settler and Indian men. Medina purportedly understood the difference between reading and watching characters, discerning when “those fine shades of character which interest most in the closet, will fail of striking on the stage.”¹⁹⁸ While Bird's women figures may not exemplify “subtle shading,” most of his male characters do, in the flaws that counteract the virtue of Ralph (horse stealing) and Roland (brashness), or the touching paternal love of the renegade Abel Doe. The complexity of the titular character is produced by a kind of split personality, or alter-ego: the pacifist Quaker Nathan Slaughter, a recluse whom settlers ironically

¹⁹⁵ Quinn, editor's note, xxii. Quinn comments on Bird's inconsistent format in *A City Looking Glass*.

¹⁹⁶ For a thorough reconstruction of (male) types, see James C. Burge, *Lines of Business: Casting Practice and Policy in the American Theatre, 1752-1899* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986).

¹⁹⁷ Henry Mayhew, *Wandering Minstrel* (Philadelphia: Fisher & Turner, n.d., ca. 1836), n.p., New York Public Library of Performing Arts. The preliminary matter lists the staffs of “principle US theatres.”

¹⁹⁸ *Ladies' Companion*, April 1837.

dub “Bloody Nathan” (for he refusal to fight Indians), shape-shifts into the murderous avenger who does slaughter Indians, garnishing his killing by carving a Christian cross on the corpse. (The avenger is called *Nick of the Woods* by whites, and *Jibbenainosay*—translated as “spirit that walks”—by Indians.) Before even recognizing the double-identity, Roland notices in Nathan a “singular intermixture of humane and ferocious elements,”¹⁹⁹ the ferocious side that critics judged “scarcely less savage” than the Indians (while noting that his physical “superhuman endowment” is never explained).²⁰⁰ Harby’s version especially erased these darker shades, redacting the Quaker pacifism, the source of inner conflict and social tension, though other versions did convey something of Nathan’s schisms.

The structure of a multi-persona character affects several zones of a playscript, and hence is related to playwrights’ knowledge and work. The *Dramatis Personae* often iterated multiple names and epithets, as if the actor played separate roles: Bloody Nathan, Nathan Slaughter, Reginald Ashburn (the earlier widower), Nick of the Woods, Jibbenainosay, the Spirit that Walks, and the Avenger. In dialogue, the playscripts switch between Nathan’s Quaker idiom of “friend” and “thee,” and the bold aggression of Nick’s voice. Haines’s directions indicate the shift in terms of manner, not by name of persona. As the secondary Indian Piankeshaw creeps up to kill Roland, Nathan approaches, “*his whole action wild and excited*”

Nath. [*Throws the body of Piankishaw off...*] See! the altar streams with the blood offering!²⁰¹

Similarly, in Medina’s version, as Piankeshaw advances to scalp Roland:

(*Music. As he goes up to dispatch Roland, Nathan appears, C. Hurry.*)
Nathan: (*Seizes Indian*). Dog of an Indian, red skin, red wolf, die! Murdering coward, die a murderer’s death!²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Bird, *Nick of the Woods*, 245.

²⁰⁰ Ainsworth, preface; review, *Southern Literary Messenger*, 569.

²⁰¹ Haines, *Nick of the Woods* (London: Lacy, n.d.), act 2, scene 1. 33

²⁰² Medina, *Nick of the Woods* (New York: Samuel French, n.d.), act 1, scene 3.

Apart from a few subtle foreshadows, Nick/Jibbenainosay speaks and acts in ways distinct from Nathan. Specific to dramatic format, both Nathan and Nick/Jibbeaninosay personas were represented by just one character label, *Nathan*.²⁰³ Whereas Bird's narrator describes the avenger as a separate character (until the clear exposition of the split), the convention of playscripts fixed even complex, mutating figures under one label on the page consistently, different from the unstable labels De Grazia, Stallybrass, and Alan Galey find in early modern scripts.²⁰⁴ Scripts presented no explicit instruction to the actor to switch, or how to enact the different roles (in contrast to the 1940 amateur version, which would clarify the shift). Instead writers delegated the timing and method of impersonation to the actor. *Not* explaining was one of the components of the trade knowledge of playwriting.

Structurally, dramatization requires an enormous shift from narration to drama format on the page, toward the multi-media enactment on stage. Bird's omniscient narrator relays the psychic interior of several characters, which dramatizers needed to externalize. But this structural act is historically contingent, inflected by particular customs. In 1838 writers still had recourse to the device of the brief aside, as when, in Haines's opening scene, Telie laments the predicament of Edith Forrester: "*(aside)* Poor lady! Poor lady!"²⁰⁵ Emotion, articulated in prose narration, was externalized for theatre audiences through several channels. For single characters, scripts relegated affect to an actor's *style* of speaking or gesturing, which was not represented in writing, but left to actor's know-how—explicit and nuanced emotional instructions which seem normal today would appear only decades later. Also, acts concluded with a crescendo of bodily action,

²⁰³ On speech label structure, see Elaine Aston and George Savona, *Theatre as Sign System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1991); on Shakespeare's "prefixes" as rather loose, see Margaret De Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, "The Materiality of the Shakespearian Text," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43, no.3 (Autumn 1993): 255-283, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2871419>.

²⁰⁴ de Grazia and Stallybrass, "The Materiality of the Shakespearian Text"; Alan Galey, "Dizzying the Arithmetic of Memory: Shakespearean Source Documents as Text, Image, and Code," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9, no. 3 (January, 2004): para. 6-8, open source, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/09-3/galedizz.htm>.

²⁰⁵ Haines, *Nick*, act 1, scene 1. 7.

and then a freeze, actors holding positions while music accentuated the emotion—indicated in playscripts as “Tableau” or “Picture.” The 1840 script ends the second act with a quick cascade of stage directions—Ralph clubs Indians; Roland disarms Braxley but Indians pinion him; Edith faints; and Telie kneels in supplication to her father—a sequence followed by “A tableau.”²⁰⁶

The second prominent male role, Ralph Stackpole, reveals other features of dramatizing and scripts. The reports of Harby’s *Nick* say that the actor Parsons would or did play the “lead,” apparently meaning Ralph Stackpole, rather than Nathan/Nick. (Besides playing Macbeth, Parsons had recently elicited accolades for his convincing impersonation of an Indian chief, and so segued from Noble Indian to Indian-killer, a blithe crossing in that era.)²⁰⁷ Ralph’s role was probably most prominent in Harby’s version. Paradoxically, Ralph seems significant in the surviving promptbook because his lines are the only ones *elided*, dropping his character label and reducing his speech to the last cue phrase, for example:

————— a ring tailed squealer
————— cock-a-doodle-do.²⁰⁸

(See appendix A, mid-page.) Promptbooks usually contained *all* lines, while an actor’s copy elided everyone else’s lines except his own—so that aberration seems significant, if enigmatic. Reports corroborate that significance. A New Orleans theatre history identifies Ralph as “the protagonist in this melodrama.”²⁰⁹ Another chronicle cites the premiere sub-title differently, *The Salt-River Roarer*, an epithet for Ralph Stackpole²¹⁰ (although the surviving manuscript uses a different sub-title). When the New Orleans newspaper excerpted a section of Bird’s novel the

²⁰⁶ *Nick of the Woods; or, Kentucky in 1782*, 48.

²⁰⁷ *Dramatic Mirror*, March 1838, 191. *Oranaska* was attributed to former Bowery Theatre writer Jonas B. Phillips.

²⁰⁸ Harby, *Nick*, act 1, scene 1.

²⁰⁹ John S. Kendall, *The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theatre* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 110.

²¹⁰ William G. B. Carson, *Theatre on the Frontier: The Early Years of the St. Louis Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1932; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), 270.

prior year, that segment featured Ralph.²¹¹ In all other finales, Ralph, while present and active, is not central, yet in Harby's he speaks the final line: "———— exterminated the Shawnees." (Actors so valued the last line that they gave it a name: *tag* or *curtain line*). Bird configured Stackpole, "the Squealer of Old Salt" as the character list describes him, as a semi-bestial woodsman—embodying the wilderness more positively than Nick (whose wildness is sinister), and more wholly than the socially-aspiring white settler characters. All dramatizations preserved Bird's dialect, animated by neologisms (splendiferous), and hyperbolic pugilistic boasting:

Silence, you tarnal critturs! My name's Tom Doodle, the rag man! and I'm for any man that insults me! ... I'm the man for a massacre!I'm a ring-tailed squealer..... Cock-a-doodle-doo-o-o.²¹²

But Ralph's virtues are compromised by his compulsion to steal horses from *white* men; the narrative frequently refers to him by the epithet, horse-thief (or, in happier moments, *valiant* horse-thief). Other dramatizations preserved this flouting of civility and racial allegiance, although doing so raised a theatrical challenge: Ralph's theft of Roland's horse incurred the *scène à faire* horseback lynching (rigging the condemned such that when the horse eventually moves, he will be hanged). This demise occasions Edith to beg Roland to free him, an act that in turn engenders Ralph's steadfast vow to protect "splenderiferous madam," which he fulfills. The Harby version whitewashed Ralph Stackpole, who does not steal from whites. Practically, the redaction spared the Russell theatre the problem of staging horses; emotionally it rendered Stackpole unequivocally likable and uncompromisingly virtuous, a principal hero. Simplifying Nathan too, Harby's version erased what little moral conflict Bird and other dramatizers allowed *within* the world of white settlers, for a simpler cartography of that all-good, all-white side against mixed-race evil (Braxley and Indians).

²¹¹ *Times Picayune* (NO), April 21, 1837, 2.

²¹² Medina, *Nick*, act 1, scene 3.

Telie, the renegade's daughter, was the most malleable lead character, however. Telie varied in quantitative presence and qualitative action. Yes, she always appears, always spends some time in the woeful status of the renegade's daughter, always vows to accompany the endangered couple, and always pleads with her father to spare them (and always by reminding him of his whiteness)—yet from that common base, her fate follows different paths. Here she dies...here she lives. She turns out to be Roland's blue-blood cousin... or remains the renegade's true daughter...or is revealed to be Nathan's daughter. Harby's version, despite his elsewhere foregrounding daughters of a Russian, a Chief, and a theatre manager, stripped the renegade's daughter of action, skill, presence, and relevance, demoting her even lower than Bird's misogynist confines; inexplicably, she disappears scenes before the finale. For Medina, Bird's figure, with some enhancements, cohered with her preferred woman type—humble, virtuous, and eloquent, raised by an inadequate father, who encounters often mortal troubles. The scholars emphasizing Medina's gender themes, such as Faye Dudden, argue that Medina strengthened the role constructed by Bird, echoing the critics at the time who noticed similar enhancements to Alice in *Ernest Maltravers*, to whom “the dramatist has added fortitude, heroism, and dignified virtue.”²¹³ Yet Haines's *Nick* empowered Telie's role perhaps even more. Women headlined many of Haines's plays, as a general theme (*Life of Woman, Maiden Beware*); or in roles (*The Maid of Moffat Dale, The Soldier's Bride*); or as named individuals (*Alice Grey, Amilie, Angeline, and Ruth*). His laborer hero, the Factory Boy, was played by a cross-dressing actress.²¹⁴ Although Haines's *Nick* uses only three women's roles, he put Telie in, so to speak, the limelight (then a recent invention). Even Edith, Bird's gossamer heroine, here handles a gun,

²¹³ Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences, 1790-1870* (Yale University Press, 1994), 73; *New York Mirror*, April 14, 1838, 334-5.

²¹⁴ David H. Lawrence “Performing Working Boys: the Representation of Child Labour on the Pre- and Early Victorian Stage,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (2008): 132, doi:10.1017/S0266464X08000110.

though her primary function as emblem of feminine virtue leaves little leeway for empowered action. Telie rises at both the palpable level of stage action and the symbolic level of social relations. While all dramatizers frontloaded exposition of some aspect of the background, and all exposit Telie eventually, most chose to start with Braxley's theft of the Forrester's inheritance; only Haines delivers Telie's story first. Though a Scottish review claimed that the "author adheres to main incidents" in Bird's novel,²¹⁵ this Telie actually required several interpolations. She not only demonstrates more knowledge (of pathways and Indian psyche), which she also does in Medina's version, but she appropriates masculine action (fighting Indians) and eschews romantic love. Rather than sacrificing her life for unrequited love of her cousin (as in Medina's version) or just disappearing (as in Harby's), Telie remains present, as she does in Bird's novel, but more significantly. Her past is drastically reconfigured: not a bastard or legitimate Forrester, nor Doe's real progeny, she turns out to be the daughter of the lead character, Nathan, whereupon—since he also lives in this version—the two reunite in prayer. (And thus we understand why they've spoken a similar, refined rhetoric all along.)

It is difficult to deduce why Haines enhanced women roles, which cannot be explained as a *national* reflex: the other British versions underemphasize Telie (and women in general). Given the social context of playwriting, Haines perhaps shaped the parts for colleagues, actresses in the theatre circuit—again, in this very social textual labor, playwrights crafted roles as service for particular performers (whether as favor, gift, or exchange). The strong Telie figure in Medina or Haines did cohere with certain theatrical trends: cross-dressed roles (as in Haines's *Factory Boy*), women wielding guns (as in Medina's *Ernest Maltravers*), the whole genus of tragic heroines (Ophelia) and its American species, the tragic Indian maiden (*Pocahontas*). Not only literary, these alterations would translate *theatrically* into an actress capturing audience attention by how

²¹⁵ *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), September 2, 1841, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale.

much time she occupied center stage, how many lines she spoke, the rhetorical quality of those lines, how vivid was her action, and her presence in the play's most tense, weepy, and joyous moments. The tragic-heroic Telie supplied a showcase for an actress of a certain stripe—though Medina's would draw more actresses to it than Haines's, across the decades.

Minor characters also illustrate the transmutability and variation of dramatizing. Bird's character Emperor, a "servant" (though Kentucky was a slave state), is less intelligent than the dog Peter and less courageous than Ralph Stackpole, though still integral to the traveling group and more loyal than the peddler Dodge (with whom he is often paired); his death by Indian attack hardly registers within the chain of the whites' misfortunes. Through the contradiction of his cowardly action against his bravado speech ("ole Emperor will fight and die for missie"),²¹⁶ Emperor supplied comic relief and, within the story's racial geometry, a thematic contrast to the "Red niggers"—an amiable acquiescence to subjugation, stemming from the feeling Emperor calls "natural 'fection" for his white bosses, in Haines's version.²¹⁷ On stage, Negroes were performed by white men in black-face—the celebrated "Jump Jim Crow" T. D. Rice performed in the Bowery Theatre in Medina's era, *Nick* was often supplemented by minstrel shows, and later in London it would become a minstrel burlesque. (After the US Civil War, one or two "coloured" actors would play Nathan earnestly, but only, records suggest, in the UK.)²¹⁸ Off stage, meanwhile, black spectators were partly segregated in the US—"Colored persons admitted only to the Gallery" as a Boston poster ordained—though alongside whites of lower social orders.

²¹⁹ Half the *Nick* dramatizers retained Emperor, including Medina, according to early playbills.

²¹⁶ Bird, *Nick of the Woods* (Albany NY: New College and University Press, 1967), 105, chap.8

²¹⁷ Haines, *Nick*, act 1, scene 3. 21.

²¹⁸ The Black actor P. G. Dumbar was mentioned in the *Era*, July 30, 1865; the possibly Black actor Morgan Smith mentioned in *Dundee* (Scotland) *Courier & Argus*, December 14, 1867, *British Newspapers*; the first sign of the enduring minstrel music-hall burlesque *Nick* in the *Era*, September 21, 1873, followed by many notices.

²¹⁹ Playbill, *Nick of the Woods*, Howard Athenaeum, Boston, September 22, 1863, Small Special Collections, University of Virginia.

(She also constructed black characters as helpers to the heroines of two short stories.)²²⁰ But her Emperor vanished sometime before the first published edition in the 1850s. Perhaps Emperor was legislated away: By 1852, regulations related to black-face performance—"where white persons, for gain or profit, appeared in public dressed and disguised as Negroes, and imitated their language and actions"—had arisen in New York State,²²¹ and the legislation may have affected racial characterization in drama there. The Southern version, Harby's, dropped Negro roles altogether, which might tempt our speculation about regional trends in race representation—but that inference would have to reckon with the two British versions that also omitted them (1840 and 1844). Haines, whose villain in *My Poll* is a slave-ship captain, included Emperor, adding a second Negro, "Sambo," while the 1858 equestrian version integrated Emperor along with live horses and a dog.

Spectacle Melodrama

All six versions of *Nick*, though arranged for distinct theatres, share nearly similar characterizations (except for variations of Telie), along with other qualities of melodrama. The mode of melodrama could register as literary and accomplished then to even the educated elite; sentimental, hyperbolic dramatizations were not excluded from the realm of literature, as they would be later under Modernist gauges (a development examined in later chapters). The conditions of attention of a large house and boisterous audience—the food and chatter and hollering that normally accompanied most shows—correspond to the qualities of melodrama: simplistic (broad-brushed) characterization and morality, music emphasizing emotions, and fast rotations of visible action.²²² Playwrights wrote scripts for these modes of attention, with little

²²⁰ Medina's black figures: a Governor's doorman, Pompey, allows the heroine/victim to enter, in "Panorama of Life"; a "black woman" (her phrase) nourishes the victim heroine in "Sister of Charity."

²²¹ *Abbott New York Digest* (New York: Baker, Voorhis, 1930), 118.

²²² On audiences, see Bank, "Bowery" in *American Theatre Companies*.

need to tie up all loose ends and explain all causalities—in Medina’s, we never learn how Telie discovered her origin; in the 1844 version, the evil Braxley goes unpunished.

Of the multiple sensations for which playwrights designed a script, a definitive one was music—the *melo* in the term melodrama. In the dramatization of fiction, music was one of the channels through which the narrative could be translated—to convey not a specific detail or sentence, but ambience and emotion, the moods that prose describes across paragraphs. The way playwrights wrote for theatre with music was *not* to write much about it—a brief note *music* or *chord* left the selection of particular melodies to the acumen of the musical directors (who, like dramatizers, worked from prior sources, rather than by composing anew). In the 1858 equestrian *Nick*, music is not mentioned until well through the second act, though it would have resounded even before the curtain lifted. Medina’s script calls for music specific to Telie, but without qualifying the *kind* of melody to play. Playscripts did detail music when it arose *within* the story, as in Medina’s settler chorus, or when in all early dramatizations, the Colonel commands men to fife a battle-call; Haines’s and Harby’s versions specified the song “Yankee Doodle Dandy,” and the 1840 version added the incongruous anti-army ditty “The Rogue’s March.”²²³ But the ambient music was relegated to others in the social matrix constituting a production.

The dramatizer also needed to translate a scene’s physical environment. Technological effects mattered at least as much as literary quality in melodrama. According to the *Ladies Companion*, Medina understood how “the most delicate and finished picture” in prose fiction would become reduced by “the coarse daubing of scene painting,” all details blurred “at the

²²³ On theatre music, see Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielson, “Music in Melodrama: “the Burden of Ineffable Expression”?” *Nineteenth Century Theatre & Film* 29, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 30-39, accessed June 2, 2009, International Index to Performing Arts Full Text, ProQuest, ISSN 1748-3727; Katherine Preston, “The Music of Toga Dramas,” in *Playing Out the Empire: “Ben-Hur” and Other Toga Plays and Films, 1883-1908*, ed. David Mayer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), chap. 2; and Anna Dhu Shapiro, “Action Music in American Pantomime and Melodrama, 1730-1913,” *American Music* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 49-72, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051562>.

distance of a theatrical view,” in the expanse of large theatres (such as the Bowery’s three-thousand seat space). Medina’s generation wrote for two-dimensional representation, paintings on sliding “wings” or vertical “drops”—static, generic, and hardly nuanced. Haines’s version sets one scene in a cave, perhaps to make use of stock scenery on hand. But theatres compensated for the static background with devices, or “stage effect.” The major theatres, for example, were equipped to simulate fire: Medina’s printed finale sets the Indian village ablaze, as she ended her *Giafar* and *Last Days of Pompeii*; two British versions also conclude with “the village on fire” or “wigwam ablaze” (1840 and 1848), and Haines’s review praises an explosion of a log house, which, like many effects, was not indicated in the published script.²²⁴

Paradoxically, commercial stage directions used a *narrative* mode; that is, they described the effect (*village on fire*), without specifying a practical cause (sulphur), which was left to backstage technology and operative know-how. Techniques would be elaborated in scripts published for amateurs (as much later in the 1940 *Nick*).²²⁵ The choice to stage or not stage fire has implications for interpretive methodologies: whatever the potent theme exuded by the idea of fire (hell comes to mind), it was incorporated into a playtext not only because of ideological imagery, but because of material imagery—the technical production and sensual consumption of spectacle. Theatre historian Caroline Radcliffe argues, through media theory, that melodrama entailed a “synthesis of media,” both creating illusion (transparent media) and making audiences enjoyably aware of “remediation” (visible media).²²⁶ At the level of writing a playscript as a means to such effects, Medina’s strength, according to the *Ladies’ Companion*, was her “quick

²²⁴ *Era* (London), May 5, 1839. The review praises the show’s “excellent machinery.”

²²⁵ The 1940 *Nick* edition for amateur theatre is detailed in chapter six.

²²⁶ Caroline Radcliffe, “Remediation and Immediacy in the Theatre of Sensation,” *Nineteenth Century Theatre & Film* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 39, accessed February 3, 2010, Literary Reference Center Plus, EBSCO Host.

knowledge of stage effect,”²²⁷ in terms of theatre production and audience reception.

Fire was combined with moving water and vehicle in a powerful scene in Medina’s version. Rivers figure prominently in Bird’s novel, supplying theme (nature and motion) as well as plot episodes (the challenge of crossing to safety), which in theatres offered the thrill of ostensibly real matter presented on stage. The river appears, to varying extents, across all dramatized versions—but never as prominently as in Medina’s. Though Haines virtually specialized in ocean stories, he made little use of the river in his *Nick of the Woods*. In Medina’s striking mid-play episode, Nick/Jibbenainosay rides a flaming canoe down a river cataract, a foreboding specter to Indians. The scene, which isn’t found in Bird’s novel, contributed no substance to dramatic development (the event has no consequences) but much to the spectacle and to the aura of the avenging figure. Other versions incorporate the river in milder ways: it sits in the background, Ralph leaps it, and women wade in to find Ralph bound inside a canoe. Unlike horses, the canoe is associated with the uncivilized characters—Ralph, Jibbenainosay, and Indians. This Jibbenainosay canoe cascade scene would come to symbolize the visual and emotional power of Medina’s version (though it alone does not explain her play’s success). In an 1878 novel, *The Tritons*, a New York entourage takes an outing to *Nick* on the Bowery—the chapter is called “The Jibbenainosay”—in which this canoe episode is so significant that the narrator repositions it from mid-play to finale: “the action culminates in the grand scene where the Jibbenainosay goes over the cataract in a flaming canoe, amid clouds of fire.”²²⁸ (The scene terrorizes the gullible members of the family, to the matriarch’s consternation.) Emblematically, the canoe scene became the illustration on an advertising poster, embellished with a dead Indian

²²⁷ *Ladies’ Companion*, April 1837.

²²⁸ Edward L. Bynner, *Tritons, a Novel* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks, 1878), accessed May 15, 2009, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

in the foreground.²²⁹ (See the playbook cover in appendix V.) Medina designed *Nick* for New York City's state-of-the-art stage machinery, which were not matched everywhere. A generation later in provincial Montana, a review noted that though generally impressive, "the illusion is somewhat marred by the audible creaking of the wheels of the boat in which the Jibbenainosay sails triumphantly over the cataract."²³⁰

Another amalgamation of symbol and sensation is violence. Symbolically weapons serve a story about primal conflict, and *Nick* incorporates an arsenal: the white's invention, pistols and rifles (used sometimes by women); the Indian tomahawk (used only by men); and the pan-racial knife. (In Bird's novel, Nick's knife-carving crosses on a victim's chests functions almost as an instance—the only one—of writing.) Medina's version supplants the gratuitous violence; confronting an Indian, Nick merely lays a prop on the body, that is: "*Dashes him down, and places cross on his breast.*"²³¹ Harby's version involves guns the most, with abundant commands for rifles and their "report," as the promptbook calls it. On top of symbolic use, theatrically, rifles made use of the backstage machinery that created gun-shot noises.²³² In the Harby script, violence becomes an end, not just a means, quite literally: other versions close with some kind of post-bellum resolution verbally and poetically, but Harby's has the curtain descend as Nathan/Nick is still stomping the corpse of the chief Wenonga, with the option, the scribe noted, of the peddler slaying another Indian.

Analyzing Dramatizers

Medina's *Nick* is the only version of *Nick* and the only play in Medina's oeuvre that has

²²⁹ *Scenes from the Nineteenth Century Stage in Advertising Woodcuts*, ed. Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover, 1977), 17.

²³⁰ Edward B. Nealley, "A Year in Montana," *Atlantic Monthly* 18, no. 106, August 1866, 240, Nineteenth Century Master File, Paratext.

²³¹ Medina *Nick*, act 1, scene 3.

²³² On rifle sound effects, see David Collinson, *The Sound of Theatre: From the Ancient Greeks to the Modern Digital Age* (Eastbourne, UK: PLASA, 2008), 50.

been analyzed by previous scholars. These discussions have pursued mainly two byways: her representation of women (seen as positive), and her dramatization of other figures in relation to race and nation (seen as negative). In relation to gender, Faye Dudden finds that Medina advanced Telie's position out of a proto-feminist impulse (which she also finds in the ostensible sub-text of Medina's published poem, an indictment of Hamblin). That interpretation is repeated by Miriam López-Rodríguez: Medina's heroines "are brave and active women who do not wait passively for men around them to protect their lives and honor. Defying patriarchal conventions these heroines claim the right to have their own personalities and not be mere vessels of their families' honor."²³³ While the argument might find corroboration in Medina's heroine-centered fiction, it needs to reckon with several points: Medina's Telie, whatever her wisdom, is fated to die on behalf of unrequited love and, as Laura Mielke points out, her virtues serve the interest of the dominant race in their aggressions against Indians.²³⁴ If Medina enhanced the agency of women characters out of her gender loyalty, why did a man, Haines, configure an even stronger Telie? Theatrical trends, including actresses' lines of business and circulating types, need factoring into gendered analyses of dramatizations.

Pursuing the second vein of nation and race identities, in his dissertation, Marc Mullen considers Medina's transformations to Bird's novel in relation to the melodramatic mode, noting that Medina sought to stress the distinction between Bird's whites and Indians, and to foreground the frontiersman trope, as a national type, in Ralph.²³⁵ Mullen is well attuned to the conditions of theatre writing, correcting histories guided by anachronistic (modern) expectations; my point here is that in his reading, the heavily mediated published drama can reveal Medina's ideologies.

²³³ Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre*, 73; López Rodríguez "Louisa Medina," in *Women's Contribution*, 30.

²³⁴ Laura Mielke, *Moving Encounters: Sympathy and the Indian Question in Antebellum Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2008).

²³⁵ Marc Mullen, "Sympathetic Vibrations: the Politics of Antebellum Melodrama," PhD dissertation (University of California/Irvine, 1999), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 9932102.

Laura Mielke, in her analysis of the Indian-white “encounter in US literature,” argues that Medina, to counter the noble savage type, relocated its virtues into whites: Telie replaces Pocahontas while Ralph and Nathan “stand in for” Forrest’s figure Metacom.²³⁶ In this genealogy, writers respond to the very genre in which they write, rather than to circulating motifs at large: Bird’s novel corrected *novels* (although he had written plays), while Medina’s drama corrected *dramas* (although these were based on novels). Despite their differences, together such studies represent the tendency of much literary analysis to presume fixed texts, single authors, and knowable intentions, implicitly positing a direct trajectory from the dramatist’s mind through the text onto stage, where it projects meaning to audience members. Both Mullen and Mielke foreground *sympathy*, the affective reception, in their titles, and in Mielke’s explicit argument that Medina’s dramatization suggests that “the melodramatic encounter between the white audience members and stage Indians spring from a national disorder.”²³⁷ Compared to the main strain of drama historiography mentioned earlier, which laments the constrained agency of the playwright, the cultural studies literary approach, concerned with social significance rather than aesthetic quality, *enlarges* the leeway of playwrights, reading greater expressive agency than the conditions actually afforded. These rightly recognize the larger cultural resonances of drama regardless of style—responding to the social, not only literary, relevance of historical theatre—yet they do so without fully historicizing the *conditions* of the production of theatrical texts—in ownership rights, systems of payment, artistic hierarchies, social networks, and public status, and other factors that mediated the processes of theatre texts. As Roger Chartier argues, intentions do

²³⁶ Mielke, *Moving Encounters*.

²³⁷ Mielke, *Moving Encounters*, 185

not traverse directly from writing to reception, since “multiple determinations” organize “the social space of literary production.”²³⁸

Without disagreeing that national and racial themes emanate from the texts available to us, I sketch the fuller picture of playwriting partly to complicate this kind of historical reconstruction of motives and meanings from those sources (that is, of unmediated authorial intention). At the level of individual psyche, the writers occupied heterogeneous social-cultural positions. R. M. Bird, a university-trained medical doctor from an affluent, rooted Christian family in the Delaware-Philadelphia area, would go on to edit a prominent national journal and publish commentary on national economic policy. The dramatizers—a Hispanic immigrant woman, a southern Jewish school-master, and a British actor—could hardly have shared Bird’s relationship to American Christian masculine heroic identity, without complicated refractions (differences which, even when resulting in similar messages, need highlighting). The dramatizers’ oeuvres do not resound with concerns explicitly related to the United States. Like other US playwrights, Medina and Harby, far from specializing in US subjects, preferred not-American exotic history—oriental, ancient, and old-world—which gave heft to entertainment and enhanced the writer’s image as literary and learned (while possibly representing national themes *allegorically*, differently from *Nick*’s ostensible *literal* history). The maritime motif of Haines bespeaks the concerns of England. Not all writers, that is, would have assumed the role of spokesperson for US policy, even if their dramatizations harmonized with those policies. While Medina was extolled as “the most spirited and successful of our American dramatists,” she was not necessarily a writer *about* America.²³⁹ Playwrights’ expression was constrained by the factors of commercial theatre, one of which admittedly did involve the ideological message (of

²³⁸ Chartier, “Figures of the Author,” in *Of Authors and Origins: Essays on Copyright Law*, ed. Brad Sherman and Alain Strowel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 10.

²³⁹ “Theatricals,” *Ladies’ Companion*, June 1837, 100.

race, nation, and gender), but that jostled with often banal pressures to expedite novelties to fit the means of the medium and the taste of the audience, within the deeply social economics of theatre. Perhaps more than their political views, dramatists projected *professional* qualities—writing skill, social respectability, a genteel need for material compensation.²⁴⁰

Staging Indians

While all early versions of *Nick of the Woods* shared the bigoted portrait of Indians, this theme too requires nuance, especially when the Indian figure was the crux of most commentary on the novel and plays. Imagery of Indians slid easily from “noble savage” to vicious barbarian on all the stages and among almost all the agents named in this chapter: Bird had painted a pastoral idyll of Indian lads and edited *Metamora*; Medina dramatized Fenimore Cooper’s noble-savage portraits; the Bowery Theatre staged Robert Dale Owen’s *Pocahontas* soon before *Nick*;²⁴¹ Harby wrote *Tutoona, Or, the Indian Chief’s Daughter* and submitted his *Nick* to the renowned impersonator of the noble chief type, Edwin Forrest. The monstrous Indian figure did correspond to the ethos that caused actual events (notably the nearly coinciding “Trail of Tears” dislocation of Indians from the Deep South to the western territories). Yet it was also appealing for the structural quality of novelty, for *difference* from recent imagery. One of the US reviews of Bird’s novel emphasized the value of change in itself, noting that though earlier positive “sketches” of Indians were good, after “copies of copies have been so multiplied” the public had become fatigued with them.²⁴²

The theatrical symbol of Indians was one of the aspects of playwriting that changed across the decades. In its early career, *Nick* played near other red-face plays, the earnest

²⁴⁰ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*. Bourdieu’s account of the operations of fields resonates with my point here.

²⁴¹ George C. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-1949), 4: 200.

²⁴² Review of *Nick*, *Southern Literary Messenger*. The reviewer does call Bird’s Indian depiction true, as well.

Pocahontas or the parody *Metacomet*, although not usually on the same bill. After fifteen or twenty years, playbills sometimes dubbed *Nick* an “Indian play,”²⁴³ a label the early writers would not have used. In cast lists, at first Indians were segregated at the bottom, below white women, but later playbills began to position Indians at the bottom of the men’s list, while others intermixed Indians amid the white men. Then actual Indians approached: in 1870 Boston’s National Theatre promised as *entre act* an “authentic Iroquois Tribe of Indians in War Dance, songs and Indian customs,” and ten years later the Buffalo Bill show appeared just before Proctor and *Nick* in New York.²⁴⁴ In Carson City, Nevada (where Proctor played Medina’s version in the 1860s and 70s)²⁴⁵ a new production brought Indians *into* the play, according to a local journal: “genuine Indians from Pah-Ute and Washoe” performed the “stake dance” around Nathan, engendering “So much realism...timid ladies trembled,” though spectators cheered.²⁴⁶ For the same show, according to the review, Indians joined the audience, filling the back seats of the house. By 1892, Indian self-presentation integrated with white representation of them; the thrill for whites presumably emanated from the *real* rather than from spectacle and suspense. Not that actual presence marked actual improvement in the experience of Native Americans themselves—in fact the integration of Indian culture within an anti-Indian drama seems ominous. There are no signs of an actor’s re-interpreting Wenonga the way, say, Henry Irving would recast Shylock from comic to tragic figure during that era, and whites still impersonated Indians in earnest productions, or fused them with minstrel Negroes in a burlesque in London. But the phenomena of representation and reception are complex and mutating, so the question of transmission of ideology requires more than hermeneutic textual analysis.

²⁴³ *St. Albans Daily* (Vermont), June 17, 1875, American Historical Newspapers, Readex.

²⁴⁴ Playbill, *Nick of the Woods*, National Theatre, Boston, November 11, 1870, Readex/Newsbank Broadside and Ephemera series 2, no. 23728; on Buffalo Bill show Indians, see Brown, *New York Stage*, 300.

²⁴⁵ Rahill, *World of Melodrama*, 230.

²⁴⁶ “Indians on the Stage,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1892, 4, Nineteenth-Century US Newspapers, Gale.

Playwriting Transformed

Soon after the Ute co-production, two men from Nevada submitted a request for copyright to the Library of Congress for what was presumably that play, *The Shanowakin; or, The Avenger*. Allegedly a new dramatization of Bird novel,²⁴⁷ it was the last recorded *earnest* adaptation of the novel, albeit under the most altered title. The request identifies the author as Richard C. White, who elsewhere was called either director or a party in legal disputes over other plays, but not playwright. Even as putative author, White had no claim to the potential copyright, which was sought by others—copyright often protected the speculator who purchased the right with the script, rather than the writer. Those *Shanowakin* agents apparently failed to submit the required full playscript, however, and anyway the Library did not preserve files—so this version fell into the zone of missing and invisible *Nick* scripts. Still, the episode illustrates that the path for new plays had been rerouted since 1838, formalizing this often rather provisional phase of a new script, and ostensibly reinforcing a concept of textual ownership separate from publishing and protected by federal law (more powerfully than did separate case decisions). Rather than obligatory, as in the British Licensing procedure, this submission was optional; rather than protect the public from offense or the state and church from dangerous ideas, this law protected the applicant from theft of intellectual property (precisely, it entitled the owner to litigate in the event of illegitimate reproduction). British copyright, meanwhile, was inflected by the Berne international treaty, which the US did not sign, along with other stipulations that differentiated the course of scripts in England.

The 1890s *Nick* evokes the multiple transformations to the conditions of playwriting since the earlier dramatizations. In 1838 all plays were first hand-written by feather-pen; now

²⁴⁷ Library of Congress Copyright Office, *Dramatic Compositions Copyrighted in the United States 1870 to 1916* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918; repr. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968), 1: 1634, accessed June 9, 2008, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

writers also used fountain pen or typewriter, on paper in sizes more uniform while more distinct nationally. Writers could extend writing hours by electricity, or at least household gaslight, rather than candle or oil lamp. What they wrote changed subtly, not only in dramatic dialogue style (reducing exclamation points and asides), but in stage directions, which now responded to three-dimensional sets and more nuanced lighting, along with new stage-position acronyms, codes that neophytes could learn from a spate of instruction books. Directions increasingly specified emotion and small gestures, performance details formerly left to the actor's know-how. Amateur theatre opened room for amateur playwriting, at the same time that brokers, or agents, increasingly mediated between playwrights and the production of their work on stage or page, which involved copyright earnings. With stronger copyright across genres, dramatizations of novels declined. The author's playtext, under the protection of law and brokered contract, became less malleable (in principle), although it was subject to the dictates of the increasingly powerful director. The writer's playscript, meanwhile, could now be deemed valuable, as the original version of the play, sometimes worth preserving in the long-run, a task helped by the proliferation of preservation institutions (as I discuss in chapter six). As *Nick* became an outmoded drama, the 1838 modes of playwriting had become old-fashioned.

Chapter Three:

Workaday Playscripts in Mid-Nineteenth Century Theatre

In the early era of *Nick of the Woods* plays, when a new script entered a theatre, it generally underwent a “Green Room reading” at which the stage manager or playwright read the drama aloud, not without occasional dispute.²⁴⁸ Often the separate actors’ parts had been copied out beforehand, and were then distributed to the performers, again, not always without dispute, which sometimes required the dramatist to revise a speech or a role. But for the most part, the script left the writer’s hands. The prompter, almost always a man, fashioned, or adapted, a promptbook, using the playwright’s draft, a “fair” (presentable) copy, a printed edition, or a prior show’s promptbook, to which he added marks as decisions were made across rehearsals. A show required multiple types of documents and playscripts in several formats—promptbook, actors’ parts, the musical director’s cues, and in England, a dispensable script to submit to the Lord Chamberlain for licensing (or censorship). This chapter surveys this array of genres, or kinds, of practical playscripts, considering the operational function and social significance of the documents, distinct from the literary meaning of the dramatic text. Given the scarcity of both primary source specimens of *Nick* and of analyses nineteenth-century theatre documents, I reconstruct a generic analysis of these types, rather than analyze one case. In order to consider the particular qualities of the promptbook, acting copy, censorship submission copy, and musical documents, I first explain some fundamental features: the category of workaday text, the state of writing materials, and the prevalent practice of copying.

These multiple copies of playscripts comprised the core of theatre’s textual means of

²⁴⁸ One tense green room reading involved G. W. Harby’s brother, Isaac, as recounted in James Rees, *The Dramatic Authors of America* (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber, 1845), 86-8.

production, what French historian Jean-Marie Thomasseau calls “the incessant flux of the different functional writings”²⁴⁹ in his eloquent reconstruction of the censorship procedure of a nineteenth-century French play (one continental complement to the extensive studies of English drama censorship).²⁵⁰ The English theatre historian Tiffany Stern, rounding out the earlier bibliographic groundwork of W. W. Greg, presents an analytic taxonomy of the array of Early Modern English “documents of performance,” delineating a fragmented “patchwork” of types. Stern explains that each format had its own “story”—that is, writer, path of circulation, survival, and interrelation, or “attachment” to the other documents.²⁵¹ These distinct types, moreover, developed along partly separate historical trajectories across the centuries from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, some kinds persevering hardily (actor’s parts), others changing drastically (summaries for audiences), and some disappearing (scrolls read on stage)—an evolution not yet comprehensively articulated in scholarship. This chapter fills in this neglected era in the history of theatre documents, the heyday of spectacle melodrama.

These backstage document practices spread, if not globally, then at least across the nodes of international, English-language, commercial theatre (and in some features to French, Spanish, and German networks as well, in both Europe and the Americas). *Nick of the Woods* traversed this Anglo circuit rather widely through the 1840s to the early 1880s. Several actors appeared repeatedly as Nathan/Nick, others as Ralph Stackpole, and a few women embraced the vehicle of Telie, in the era when plays were selected largely for one striking single role, the star’s vehicle. At least three father-daughter pairs appeared in *Nick* (not playing father and daughter, but playing the lead male and female roles, Nathan/Nick and Telie). Joseph Proctor reproduced

²⁴⁹ Thomasseau, “Toward a Genetic Understanding of Non-contemporary Theatre: Traces, Objects, Methods,” *Theatre Research International* 33, no.3 (October 2008): 237. The journal section focuses on “genetic” methods.

²⁵⁰ Thomasseau, “Genetic Understanding,” 237; David Thomas, David Carlton and Anne Etienne, *Theatre Censorship From Walpole to Wilson* (New York: Oxford University Press 2007).

²⁵¹ Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*, 3-4.

Medina's version across the widest and longest itinerary: he frequented the northeast Boston-New York-Philadelphia corridor, sometimes extended to Baltimore; settled briefly in northern California; toured the United Kingdom for two years; and crossed from Maine to Canada (New Brunswick). Whether *Nick* was staged in Baltimore, Birmingham, or Brisbane,²⁵² workers used playscripts in the same ways—sometimes sharing the very same playscript. Sets or kits of scripts, what Thomasseau calls a “dossier,”²⁵³ accompanied touring stars, a promptbook to be handed to the resident prompter, and actors' copies to be distributed to company performers. Theatre workers carried practices and material documents with them, and actors “brought plays in their baggage.”²⁵⁴ In this mobility, the elements Frank Rahill encapsulates as “production methods and devices” were shared across theatre networks.²⁵⁵ These flows embody what recent sociology considers a community or network of knowledge and practice, an analysis more usually applied to the production and distribution of knowledge in science (that is, fields with powerful effects in contemporary society), rather than the production of entertainment or historical cases.²⁵⁶ Even beyond one cultural community of practice, workaday playscripts are significant in the ways they link individual workers, a single production, a theatre's customs, the theatre network, and the surrounding society through common materials and practices. They require methodologies different from those used for literature and performance—to focus not on the ultimate medium of theatre, but rather on the behind-the-scenes media that enabled it.

Workaday Things

As integral as these physical documents were to theatre's operation, and as widely as the

²⁵² The Australia appearance recorded in *Brisbane Courier*, April 11, 1867, accessed May 3, 2009, Australian Newspapers Beta, <http://ndpbeta.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/1282692>.

²⁵³ Thomasseau, “Genetic Understanding,” 237.

²⁵⁴ Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), 227.

²⁵⁵ Rahill, *World of Melodrama*, v.

²⁵⁶ Paul Duguid, “‘The Art of Knowing’: Social and Tacit Dimensions of Knowledge and the Limits of the Community of Practice,” *Information Society* 21, no. 2 (April-June 2005): 109-118, doi: 10.1080/01972240590925311.

practice spread, they were scarcely mentioned in print. One reads about episodes *around* the playscript—actors complaining about small roles, or prompters whispering lines to frozen performers—but less about the handlers’ direct experiences of the material text, whether page layout, ink blots, or tucking scripts in a trunk. Playscripts shared this quality with many everyday objects and office documents: while not marginal (on the contrary, they were rather central), they were not *remarkable*, that is, neither striking nor eliciting remarks. They mattered as part of a worker’s quotidian experience, the way ordinary things do. Hence my attention to them is informed by studies of everyday life, although adapted for the context of work (different from domestic objects). I position the playscripts as *workaday* things, and specifically as *workaday textual* things.²⁵⁷ The silences about ordinary things indicate only their everydayness, not their insignificance; as anthropologist Daniel Miller argues, “objects are important not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not ‘see’ them....The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations.”²⁵⁸ Playscript customs determined expectations in the sense that operatives learned to understand and handle them. Although different from the anthropological cases of daily life or ritual, industrial-era playscripts are significant to us, as cultural historical scholars, not only for what they reveal about stage presentation or public ideologies, but for what they reveal about particular textual practices within a sub-culture—including the practice of *not* writing much about such practices. Features that were unremarkable then are worth historical remarks now.

The textual dimension of theatre was taken for granted in part because it was not unique

²⁵⁷ While I have seen no theorizing of workaday things, germinations of it appear in the purported foundations of everyday studies: Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, 3 vol., trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1992); and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), esp. chap. 3. Lefebvre’s acolytes pursue mostly domestic or leisure arenas, while de Certeau emphasizes resistance (*la perruque*), not humdrum ordinariness.

²⁵⁸ Daniel Miller, introduction to *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.

to theatre, but drawn from material and practices prevalent in society: paper, ink, pens, binding, copying, memorizing, jotting notes, and reading. Although theatre history understandably emphasizes the elements *specific* to theatre, in fact the medium's behind-scenes textual elements were dependent on *general* materials and practices, a relationship worth articulating. Actors had surely memorized before they began performing, and prompters took their posts already familiar with various kinds of notes. Yet as a specialized field, theatre *refracted* this common textual culture through its particular processes: actors memorized at formidable rates, and the mode of “reading” a promptbook—an intense scanning across multiple kinds of codes—was perhaps unique within the array of workaday documents across society. The ways of handling playscripts partly constituted the specific roles in theatre—memorizing playscripts was a core part of *being* an actor; making and reading promptbooks *formed* the core of the prompter's job.²⁵⁹ Building on prior textual experiences from common culture, an operative learned to handle theatre documents as an integral part of mastering one's job—though again, this learning itself was scarcely mentioned. So contemplating the “socialness” of playscripts moves in these two directions: outward to the rest of society (in which theatre is embedded), and inward to theatre's particular modes and means of production, that is, to the textual activities of backstage operations. Both dimensions were deeply social, material, and economic.

To contemplate ordinary practices requires shifting the kinds of meanings and values of writing and reading from those usually noticed in analysis—that is, shifting to workaday reading and writing in this arena of cultural production. In the zone of backstage work, *literature* went off-duty; memorizing lines and prompting shows differs from the process of meaning-making inherent in the modes of reading presumed by many studies of literary history. As is evident

²⁵⁹ Mary Douglas, “The Genuine Article,” in *Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*, ed. S. H. Riggins (New York: Mouton de Gruyter 1994), 9-22. My point that documents partly constitute a job, a social position, resonates with Douglas's idea that “objects constitute social systems” or roles, 19.

from archival specimens, playscript copies were heavily handled (in the literal sense of used by *hand*), in sharp contrast to the tender handling of fine publications designed for aesthetic encounters. The distinction of workaday textual practices is worth emphasizing: copying, a mode of writing, differs drastically from composing (writing as a mode of expression); the prompter or actor annotated toward an external purpose, not a conceptual response; prompt reading was more like conductors reading musical scores, distinct from end-in-itself, linear-flow leisure reading of literature.²⁶⁰ Workers interacted with workaday playscripts in the mode literacy scholars demarcate as “functional reading,” which entails different ocular action, purpose, and temporality, such as scanning a train schedule grid to plan a trip, the case reconstructed by Mike Esbester.²⁶¹ Theatre work also involved functional *writing*. Both these acts were shaped by the local community of a company and the larger community of a theatre network, yet this sociality differs from that of the interpretive “community of readers” discussed in recent studies.²⁶²

These distinct modes of use inform the lives of the playscripts. In political-economy terms, the predominant worth of these playscripts was use value, albeit entwined with a kind of property value and sometimes a potential exchange value with publishers. In contrast, the playwright’s draft and published edition typically incurred exchange value *before* use value—that is, they were sold (by writers) and then used (by theatres). The value also differs from theatre’s public print material, such as tickets and programs, which theatre-goers sometimes preserved, and which antiquarians and collectors had already begun to appreciate, when “the view of what material was collectable and susceptible to cultural analysis had expanded” in the

²⁶⁰ Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities 1695-1870* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), chap. 1. Colclough articulates the genre biases of reading history scholarship.

²⁶¹ Mike Esbester, “Nineteenth-Century Timetables and the History of Reading,” *Book History* 12 (2009): 156, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOHost.

²⁶² E.g., Christine Pawley, “Seeking ‘Significance’: Actual Readers, Specific Reading Communities,” *Book History* 5 (2002): 143-160, Project Muse, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/bh/summary/v005/5.1pawley.html>.

nineteenth century, according to a historian.²⁶³ In Thomasseau's words, theatre scripts were "heterogeneous, uncertain and unstable tracks discarded in the outburst of creation," leaving merely "protean, fragmentary, sundry" remains.²⁶⁴ Actors' copies especially were often literally ephemeral, though means-of-production texts were not preserved as, and hence not classified as ephemera, and nor were they collected and marketed under other rubrics of value. Not surprisingly, most backstage copies of *Nick of the Woods* were lost. Despite or because of his wide trails, even Joseph Proctor left no playscripts behind.

Writing Materials

Each theatre production required a separate script for each part, and most *Nick* versions entailed ten or more roles: ten in the anonymous 1844 version, twelve in Harby's, fifteen in the 1858 equestrian script (not counting horses), and more in Medina's and Haines's versions. Hand copying, a practice integral to the literate strata of society, supplied the means for all small-scale textual reproduction before the spread of typewriting a half-century later. In other industries, copying kept busy the workers a manuscript historian calls "inky-fingered individuals,"²⁶⁵ the scribes and office clerks who enabled commerce and law. The centuries-old writing tool, the feather pen, was usually first cut by a specialist, but then sharpened by writers themselves, intensifying the idiosyncrasies of pen-strokes, in line thickness, angle, and sharpness of contours. The pen, though, was changing across bumpy developments, shifting from avian to mineral sources, feather to metal nib. Steel would supplant quills by the last third of the century. Other materials co-developed with the pen, since steel nibs needed a new ink that would not corrode metal, while they also needed a paper surface congenial to a metallic scratch. The steel-friendly

²⁶³ Michael P. Harris, "Printed Ephemera," in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, ed. Michael Felix Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1:127. 120-129.

²⁶⁴ Thomasseau, "Genetic Understanding," 237.

²⁶⁵ Harold Love, "The Manuscript after the Coming of Print," in *The Oxford Companion of the Book*, 1:115.

ink chemistry afforded more variation in color besides black—evident in the red and blue marks appearing in later archive specimens. (Brown ink, seen frequently on preserved pages, probably indicates rusted black, not an original brown hue.) Though less studied than other elements, ink represents an intriguing synthesis of nature, culture, and economics: for the darker black, bug secretions on trees (gall) interacted with the Middle East export “gum Arabic” binding; the other black ink was based on carbon, and called “India ink” after another corner of the British Empire; while blue for ink as well as fabric derived from indigo, an export of South Asia and South America—international amalgamations that arrived, as liquid or powder, to one’s neighborhood stationer or apothecary.²⁶⁶

While the arcane details of these processes were discussed within the respective industries, or in public science magazines, even ordinary users knew the materials and reckoned with their problems. These materials inevitably emanated cultural meanings, as de Grazia and Stallybrass speculate about the substances comprising Early Modern playscripts, though such associations are difficult to uncover in any specific instance, except for the obvious point that “pen” served as synecdoche for writing or writer.²⁶⁷ Materials were also significant for their participation in large economic processes: mechanical production replaced artisan production in all spheres, and the ingredients were traded internationally, steered by shortages and government trade policy. As a technology, papermaking was undergoing changes. Around the time *Nick of the Woods* appeared, manufacturers whitened paper by bleach—an advent that seemed appealing to users at the time, but lamentable to analysts a century later, when chlorine had eroded the

²⁶⁶ W. J. Barrow, *Manuscripts and Documents: Their Deterioration and Restoration* (1955; Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1972); Donald Jackson, *The Story of Writing* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company & Parker Pen, 1981).

²⁶⁷ Margareta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, *Shakespeare Quarterly*. de Grazia and Stallybrass consider the possible significance of rag sources of paper and urine in ink.

antique pages.²⁶⁸ Until wood-pulp became efficacious in the 1880s, paper was manufactured mainly from cloth rags, sometimes imported from abroad, but still gathered locally. The trade was so ubiquitous that the rag-picker became a cultural trope, the titular figure in several plays.²⁶⁹ The rag base rendered paper subject to changes even in agriculture, and hence in slavery, notably when the cotton gin exacerbated plantation exploitation and accelerated textile production. Paper manufacturing, like other industries, was industrializing, in turn affecting print processes, in ways that both opened and constrained women's work in both industries.²⁷⁰ An 1850 commentator listed the woman print worker—"the sewing and folding and press-room girl"—as one social type in the medley that comprised Bowery Theatre audiences.²⁷¹

The varieties of paper are manifest in *Nick* specimens. One single playscript could combine different stocks and formats (separate pages or a pre-fabricated notebook). In thickness and durability, writing paper ranged from fragile, to moderately sturdy (the Harby book uses 20lb or higher stock), to a sturdy substance and textured surface resembling watercolor paper (as in one act of the 1844 *Nick*). Unlined stationary style was common, colored in shades of white but also soft blue or a rare brown: Harby's scribe used blank white (or whitish) sheets; in the Boston Theatre, the copyist used blue-tinted stock.²⁷² But other papers were lined as if from pupils' notebooks, even when the prompters disregarded the lines—as happened in the George Becks *Nick* promptbook. (See appendix D.) Again, though, almost no one made mention of these features of theatre production, at least not in ways that reach us. Whether operatives used paper

²⁶⁸ Barrow, *Manuscripts and Documents*, 35.

²⁶⁹ Rag-picker dramas: Felix Pyat, *Le Chiffonnier de Paris*, 1848; Edward Stirling, *The Rag-Picker of Paris; or, The Modest Modiste*, 1847; *The Rag-Picker's Daughter*, MS, n.d., Boniface-Jones Papers, New York Public Library.

²⁷⁰ Judith A. McGaw, *Most Wonderful Machine: Mechanization and Social Change in Berkshire Paper Making, 1801-1885* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), chap. 2 and 3. The Berkshires supplied New York's paper.

²⁷¹ George G. Foster, *New York by Gas-Light: with Here and There a Streak of Sunshine* (New York: Dewitt & Davenport, 1850), 87, accessed March 9, 2011, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

²⁷² Medina, *Nick of the Woods*, print/MS promptbook (Boston: W. V. Spencer, n.d., ca. 1856), Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

from the theatre's correspondence stationary, or procured a supply from a stationer specifically for promptbooks, whether they concocted their own glue or bought it ready-made—the details of backstage textual practices are dim, except where they left manifest traces on the document itself. The costs of these supplies are difficult to translate, requiring elaborate excavation and multi-variable calculation (though one Philadelphia theatre worker logged his 1846 expenditures: twenty cents for some amount of ink, fifty cents for a quire of paper, and one dollar for a gold pen).²⁷³ Theatre in-house copyists may have drawn materials from their personal writing supplies at home, when the economics of personal possessions and theatre supplies co-mingled, as they did for costumes. As workaday supplies, though, these mostly went unrecorded.

The material substances affected handwriting—the marks we try to decipher in our archive samples. Unlike quills sharpened by writers themselves, metal nib pens, which became cheaper as their manufacture became industrialized, engendered a more standardized and constant look. Metal afforded the fine lines enabled the ascending calligraphic style, Copperplate, as quill did not. Yet quill nibs co-existed alongside metal nibs until mid-century.²⁷⁴ Also, in relationship to letter-styles, theatre workers travelled far from local tendencies. The brevity of most people's formal schooling, in conjunction with relatively *ad hoc* curricula (before the pervasion of national systems), allowed a diversity of writing styles even within one country. Archival copies attest to that variety. Handwriting ran a wide gamut: a right or left or upright angle; tall or short; thin or thick (responding to quality of ink and nib); blunt serifs and arabesque swirl—as well as the overall quality Thomasseau calls the “momentum.”²⁷⁵ (Some variety is illustrated in appendixes A to I.) A manuscript of *The Last Days of Pompeii* attributed to Medina

²⁷³ Thomas à Becket, Sr., 1846 Diary, À Becket Family Diaries and Promptbooks, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. This musician-copyist-actor recorded other everyday textual activities: composing and copying text and music for theatre (earning about \$65), buying Shakespeare plays, reading books, and studying roles.

²⁷⁴ Jackson, *Story of Writing*, 134.

²⁷⁵ Thomasseau, “Genetic Understanding,” 239.

(as her autograph) bears elegant, tall, consistent, and legible calligraphy, a testament to learnedness as well as to her *display* of learnedness (if indeed it shows her own hand).²⁷⁶ Extant playscripts display elegant tendrils but also illegible clunky scrawl. Pen styles differ from one copy to the next for the same play, or they differed even *within* a script: one writer began neatly but devolved into a hasty scrawl; one script was made by separate copyists, who switched mid-text. An actor's part could be written out by several kinds of workers, a difference reflected in the divergent handwriting. Where actors copied their own parts, each one shows a different hand (or sometimes shifts hands within one part); where a theatre enlisted one operative to make all copies, the set is unified, if uneven in attentiveness; while some consistent, graceful sets of copies indicate the labor of a professional scribe.²⁷⁷ How were they paid for the drudgery? Perhaps by direct fee for service, or else remuneration may have fallen within one bundled salary for prompters, or conceivably one might have copied by some *pro bono* or in-kind exchange or gift—many possibilities seem feasible in these unrecorded, informal currencies of backstage work, where multiple economies co-mingled.

Scribal Copying

The Harby manuscript was written out by a self-described “scrivener,” D. D. Davis, whose job bears some of the features of the professional copy.²⁷⁸ Like scribes, he autographed the script at the end as a kind of built-in business card, and his penmanship perseveres with fairly tall, well-rounded and legible letters (see appendix A). Theatre workers, copying in haste as a minor duty amid their other jobs, often subordinated aesthetics to speed; in many script copies,

²⁷⁶ Medina, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, MS, 1856, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. (If Medina did write the MS, it would date to ca. 1838-39, before she died.)

²⁷⁷ James C. Burge, *Lines of Business: Casting Practice and Policy in the American Theatre, 1752-1899* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 168. Burge refers briefly to actors' making or procuring copies.

²⁷⁸ Harby, *Nick of the Woods*, MS. copy, n.d., act 1, scene 1, Clifton Waller Barrett American Literature collection, Small Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

handwriting deteriorates, and niceties—such as punctuation—fall away as the pages progress. Davis decorated the ends of acts with tornado loops (a “flourish” in bibliography terms), while underscoring phrases with double or triple lines. He sketched a frilly sleeve-cuff onto the common manicule (☞), a rich symbol I return to below. (See appendix C.) Following Copperplate letter-style, Davis used the *f* form of “s,” as in “cros*f* on the breast of a darnd Injun.”²⁷⁹ The tall *f*(s), though not defunct—it appears on the 1844 Lord Chamberlain *Nick* too—was no longer standard in print or manuscript. Such markings manifest an education in penmanship and a scribal attention to the text’s *visual* style even beyond its utility. In the tidy and elegant playscript specimens, such signs of effort on the appearance of the document seem more surprising than sloppy jobs, given the destiny of workaday documents. But even for just a small public, handwriting advertised one’s social and moral character, as the cultural historian Tamara Thornton elaborates,²⁸⁰ as well as one’s vendible talents.

Davis’s Harby copy, while legible and relatively pretty, does bespeak attitudes different from diligence, however. It is marred by errors more typical of theatre workers’ copies: calling Colonel Bruce a *General*, fumbled the personal pronoun in “Girl, you affright you [i.e., “me”],” and misspelling the eponymous word in *Knick of the Woods*. If not errors, the copy shows idiosyncrasies in drama format, as when, signaling one line of dialogue, Davis inserted the stage direction “Roland (*speaking*)”²⁸¹—an addition more typical of opera (because performers might sing the line) than of drama. The script concluded with an atypical “post-script” note describing *optional* stage directions for the finale, whether copied from his source, or by his independent addition (shown in appendix A). When found in avant-garde drama, an alternative ending (like

²⁷⁹ Harby, *Nick*, act 1, scene 1.

²⁸⁰ Tamara P. Thornton, *Men of Character, Scribbling Women: Penmanship in Victorian America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

²⁸¹ Harby, *Nick*, act 1, scene 1.

other aberrations) is imbued with aesthetic significance, but is interpreted differently, or is merely perplexing, in workaday documents.²⁸² Davis followed the suggestion with the peculiar phrase “Information Gratis,” sounding something near sardonic (see appendix A). The intermediary scribe left strong, if not wholly decipherable, traces of his mediation.

The Prompter

The Harby book bears the marks of multiple hands and minds, Davis’s succeeded by one or more prompters (who corrected some errors). This layering was characteristic of promptbooks, as Roger Chartier and other scholars note.²⁸³ In the analysis of material text and the trajectory of playscripts, the prompter shifts to the center, different from the actor or director core of page-to-stage analyses. (Though the term “prompter” sometimes overlapped “stage manager” or “manager,” I follow the most prevalent denotation, which referred to one job distinct from managing.) The prompter interacted with the playscript more intimately than other operatives, and also more continuously from casting to curtain and even sometimes afterward. More than did playwriting or acting, prompting left distinct traces on the working document in more specialized marking systems. During the rehearsal phase, the prompter recorded decisions (or commanded an assistant to record them), read absentees’ parts, and fed actors unlearned lines, while perhaps executing the regulations concerning actors’ behavior (levying fines for not memorizing on time). During inactive moments, the prompter, who had been called *book-holder* or *book-keeper* in earlier eras, was charged with the “supremely important responsibility of looking after the

²⁸² The note reads: “☞ At this end of this Scene Pardon Dodge is usually dragged in by an Indian who is scalping him[,] pulls off his wig for a scalp and is brandishing his Tomahawk over it when Dodge trips him up and kills him as Curtain falls.” This feature of optional directions resembles avant-garde experiments, such as those analyzed in Kathleen A.F. Conlin, “Performance Documentation: An Analysis of Written Materials (Promptbooks, Post-Scriptive Texts),” PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan 1984, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 8412121.

²⁸³ Chartier, *Publishing Drama in Early Modern Europe* (London: British Library, 1999), chap. 3. Chartier disentangles three layers in a 1676 *Hamlet* promptbook.

company book the definitive text used for the performance,²⁸⁴ to ward off theft of ideas or other hazards. During the show, prompters reminded erring actors of their lines—the task most often mentioned in discussions about them—but they also orchestrated the other backstage processes: the punctuation of music and curtain, the sound and light effects, and the readying of actors for entrances.²⁸⁵ The job, then, required a fusion of skills at several dimensions, textual, technical, and social.

Within the theatre hierarchy (in relation to power, status, and earning), the job fell in the middle-upper rungs, high among backstage operatives, but lower than top-billing performers. The work was remunerated by salary, sometimes at rates lower than secondary actresses,²⁸⁶ often supplemented by benefit performances (in the US). Besides financial remuneration, for symbolic reward, prompters were credited on playbills or programs. Some printed playbooks named prompters as the source (actual or alleged) of the manuscript, a kind of by-line that boosted the authority of the printed script in ways discussed in the next chapter. A Boston prompter, J. B. Wright, was thus acknowledged multiple times by the local publisher Spencer, while a large set of his handled promptbooks has been preserved, several in the same set as the *Nick* promptbook signed by Proctor and Becks.²⁸⁷ (Though Wright brushed by the path of *Nick*—in the realms of theatre, publisher, and the Becks bequest—nothing indicates that he prompted the play.) Despite their import, though, prompters were not extensively written about at the time; by name or generic role, they appear only in passing mention, mainly for their interaction with actors on stage during a show rather than their full array of duties. Though some stars passed through the

²⁸⁴ Peter Bael, *Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 320.

²⁸⁵ The prompter's tasks (in a prior era) are iterated in Stephen Wischhusen, introduction to *The Hour of One: Six Gothic Melodramas* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1975), 3.

²⁸⁶ For a mid-century sample of salary schedules, see *American Theatre Companies 1749-1887*, ed. Weldon Durham (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 517.

²⁸⁷ Roger Stoddard, "A Guide to Spencer's Boston Theatre: 1855-1862," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 79, pt. 1 (April 1969): 45-98; over a dozen scripts associated with prompter Wright are held in the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

prompting job at some phase of their career, and though prompters acquired reputations as good or poor, the role by itself it did not warrant memorializing; no industrial-era prompter *qua* prompter wrote a memoir or elicited a biography.²⁸⁸ Even in scholarship, no one scholarly article or monograph focuses on the job. In theatre history, actors have overshadowed their script copies, while prompters have been overshadowed by their books.

Yet prompting brought one of the most intensive interactions with the playscript. Unlike other phases of the playscript's trajectory, the promptbook was associated with a particular location and furniture, which garnered specific terms: the book sat at the "prompt table" on stage during rehearsal; during the show it moved to the "prompt corner" or "prompt proper" on one designated side of the visible stage (whence "prompt side," PS, and "opposite prompt," OP, designated one or the other side of backstage). Sometimes that place was the "prompt box" (distinct from the hooded pit at the forestage common to continental European theatre or opera).²⁸⁹ While the rehearsal desk gave the prompter a commanding view of the stage, the show-time position made both person and playscript invisible to audiences—an obscurity that helped constitute to the theatre-going experience. Though abundant anecdotes describe an audience *hearing* the prompter whisper a line, I have seen none refer to the public *seeing* the promptbook from which he read.

Like all positions, prompting was embedded in the social world of theatre. As a vocation, prompting was often a transient post, just one phase in an actor's multi-job career; its skills were acquired by informal apprenticeship, sometimes across a trajectory from call-boy to assistant

²⁸⁸ Kate Ryan, *Old Boston Museum Days* (Boston: Little Brown, 1915), 137-9, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. The actress's memoir, an exception, does dwell on one prompter, the "slave to duty" George Pitman, who worked under William Seymour. (I viewed both men's copies of *Nick*, though Pitman's was unused.)

²⁸⁹ *International Dictionary of Theatre Language*, ed. Joel Trapido, Edward A. Langhans, and James R. Brandon (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), s.v. promptbook, etc.; Wilfred Granville, *Dictionary of Theatrical Terms* (London: A. Deutsch, 1952), s.v. prompt table, etc.

prompter to prompter (after which he often was graduated to stage manager). The post was filled almost always by men; even when actresses were impersonating male authority figures on stage, off-stage mores precluded women from that rung of the backstage hierarchy. Prompting was also, like conducting, if not as isolated as playwriting, still a relatively individual task, in contrast to acting (an activity common to the whole cast). This informal, transient, and relatively separate nature of the post left more leeway for idiosyncratic invention, even as the main methods of promptbooks and prompting were common across the English-language theatre world. Unlike musical scores, the prompt marks never solidified into a unified notational system akin to shorthand (which was proliferating at the time, in rival systems and textbooks).²⁹⁰ Given the circulations and continuities of theatre practices, prompters adopted shared tendencies, in the layout of pages, the methods of marking playtext, and the range of symbols used. While sharing family resemblance, though, promptbooks ranged even to quirky variations. This loose repertoire is illustrated by the three *Nick* promptbooks: the Harby manuscript, and two based on published editions of Medina's version, one from the Boston Museum under William Seymour, the other signed by George Becks for some 1880s New York production (invoked at the top of chapter one),²⁹¹ supplemented by sundry other promptbooks from the pre-typewriting period.

Promptbook Construction

The scrivener Davis copied the Harby script into the customary layout for manuscript promptbooks: the playtext written on one page, a blank sheet for prompt-notes on the facing page. Most manuscript promptbooks use the structure of playtext on the right (recto), prompt-marks on the left (verso), resulting in a two-page spread as one at-a-glance unit:

²⁹⁰ Louis A. Leslie, *The Story of Gregg Shorthand* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

²⁹¹ Medina, *Nick of the Woods*, print/MS promptbook (New York: Samuel French, n.d., ca. 1860-72), New York Public Library of the Performing Arts; Medina, *Nick of the Woods*, Princeton University Library.

Prompt notes	Playtext
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(Also the Becks promptbook of Medina’s version in appendixes D and E.) The blank sheet allowed prompters to write, and then read, the range of signals that coordinated most elements of the show underway, an elaborate semiotics I return to below. Printing did alter the construction of promptbooks, yet given the thick back-and-forth between print and handwriting within theatre documents, it is misleading to separate them into distinct types of documents, as modern book cataloging does.²⁹² Some prompters combined manuscript for one act with print for another (when promptbooks, like playwrights’ drafts, were often assembled from materially distinct sections). Even where print versions existed, theatres may have used handwritten copies for promptbooks, or a hybrid including substantial hand-written elements. Manuscript historian Harold Love argues that users did not always experience the distinction of medium: “The transition of textual work from the handwritten to [mechanical] reproduction did not, in many cases, make much difference to the attitude of the worker or to how the product was used.”²⁹³ Print may not always have been automatically preferable for backstage use, as legibility depends on customs of reading. Visually, before mass-produced eye-glasses and flexible lighting, the printed page could have seemed more troubling to read—in the backstage, workaday mode of reading—than handwriting, given the publishers’ crammed page layout, small fonts and splinter-thin line spacing (qualities discussed in the next chapter). Squeezed into double-columns of small typeface, Dicks’s *Nick of the Woods* was hardly amenable to workaday use. Handwriting was deciphered regularly in daily life and became more familiar yet when a prompter wrote for himself, since the very making of the mark could render it more memorable and recognizable.

²⁹² David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). McKitterick criticizes this split for obscuring actual handlers’ understandings of books in the past.

²⁹³ Love, “Manuscript,” in *Oxford Companion*, 119.

The economized printed text required considerable additional space—paper surface—for adding prompt notes. A few prompters used the printed pamphlets as they came, but most reconstructed printed plays *into* promptbooks, using assorted techniques. Some glued print pages onto blank sheets (which, since it pasted down every verso, required two copies of the play). When using just one print copy, a few glued the two-sided text pages onto paper frames (cut from blank sheets), as was done for one section of one promptbook of *The Last Days of Pompeii*.²⁹⁴ The Seymour and Becks *Nick* promptbooks, though a generation apart and using different publishers' editions, were both configured by the predominant technique: loosening the publisher binding, inserting blank sheets between playtext pages as vehicles for prompt notes, and then hinging the new pages by stitch or glue. (In these hybrid print-manuscript books, the prompt-page and playtext rotate left and right sides at each turned page, adding complexity to prompt-reading.) These reconfigured publications usually needed reinforcement for durability, since the publisher's frail wrapper would not withstand workaday handling. The Seymour book-maker covered the Spencer *Nick* with a crude-weave buckram, or burlap, stiffened by a coating. Other plays within the same Seymour collection of promptbooks bear similar covers, suggesting the hand of one prompter during his run at the Boston Museum; since the theatre's later prompter J. R. Pitman used different techniques, it does seem that the prompter, not the theatre, defined the methods.²⁹⁵ The in-house re-covering was a workaday counterpart to the old aristocratic custom of hiring artisan binders for a personal library, a feature more related to the status of both book and owner.

²⁹⁴ A fascinating specimen, this mysterious *Last Days of Pompeii* promptbook incorporates a different format per act: one manuscript, one the print-paste on blank sheets fashioned as frames. It bears no by-line, and the text's finale differs from Medina's published version. Boniface-Jones Papers, Box 3, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Division, New York Public Library.

²⁹⁵ Several J. R. Pitman promptbooks are held at the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, some with and some without interpolated pages, and some part of the Becks Bequest.

Prompters made choices about several aspects of the promptbook, including appearance. The dimensions of the paper, since pages could be cut down from larger sheets, also allowed tailoring. Some prompt-pages were cut *larger* than the printed pages (making more note space but untidy book contours); a few used blank sheets *smaller* than the printed page. In Becks's and Seymour's middle-way, the clean pages evenly match the size of the printed script (as is visible in appendix D). Why would these configurations vary? Perhaps for different priorities of serviceability, whether one wanted to enlarge the space for notes or enable easy page-turning; perhaps for other conveniences, such as fitting on a bookshelf; or perhaps even for non-functional qualities, such as the visual appeal of tidy edges and a book-like appearance. Some sensibility of aesthetics, at least in the degree of neatness, is manifest on many promptbooks. Even as the predominant value of the book lay in its utility, function did not determine a uniform design, which was also shaped by material supplies, local prompting custom (whether individual or house style), and idiosyncratic preference. The book's utility was inflected by social qualities.

According to a book-craft historian, Frank Comparato, "the book quietly owes its integrity to its binding."²⁹⁶ Qualities such as *integrity* and *status* take different form in the case of backstage documents, however. Binding is usually visible in these promptbooks, showing the variations of this craft. For handwritten books, some copyists used pre-bound notebooks, diverting published blank books, lined notebooks, or account ledgers from their more prevalent uses in schools, business, and homes. The options are apparent in Lord Chamberlain files of license submissions, which drew from the same materials as promptbooks: the 1844 Pritchard submission to the Lord Chamberlain's licenser used a booklet for one section, while the nearby

²⁹⁶ Frank E. Comparato, *Books for the Millions: A History of the Men whose Methods and Machines Packaged the Printed Word* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1971), 2.

US playwright Charlotte Barnes's submission used a pre-bound account book.²⁹⁷ In the assemblage of promptbooks, from print or manuscript, prompters needed to fasten the pages to produce the "integrity" Comparato identifies. Before the advent of metal fasteners and staplers, sewing was the prevailing technique for binding backstage copies. The Becks *Nick* was bound by a few stitches in thick thread (as is slightly visible in appendix D), similar to the 1844 *Nick* submitted to the Lord Chamberlain and many others. Even this small detail bespeaks diversity. Theatre booklet binding varied in the *material* of the cord (thread, string, or ribbon), and its *color*, from bland whites to bright yellow. These ingredients were presumably drawn from supplies at home or backstage; theatre's textual work may have shared materials, if not sewing skills, with others working in textile production, for costume or curtain. Even the structure of stitches varied—the most typical vertical joints, or horizontal sutures (called "stabbings"), or the better-reinforced kind, a backwards-E form, used in the Seymour *Nick* (also manifest on the actor's part shown in appendix F). Even punctured holes differed in implement, neatness, position, and quantity (the 1844 script was bored with paired holes). However operatives learned to sew, or from wherever they drew the stitch methodology, stitch-binding resembled labors elsewhere: sewing, sailmaking, leather-tooling, and of course bookbinding. The textual practices integrated into offices, workshops and homes, in other words, also entered theatre.

The Semiotics of Prompt Notes

Whether configured from manuscript or print copies, promptbooks required additional notes to guide a real-time production. Prompters needed mementos especially for those behind-the-scenes actions that produced stage effects, such as changing backdrops or simulating thunder. This type of mark-making occupies a peculiar and complex ontology in the realm of texts. It

²⁹⁷ *Nick of the Woods*, Add. MS 42979, Lord Chamberlain's Plays (see chap. 1, n.56); Barnes, *The Forest Princess; or, Two Centuries Ago*, Add. MS 42979, Oct-Nov, 1844, ff. 1127, no. 3, Lord Chamberlain's Plays, British Library.

involves a particular mode of *writing* distinct from both literary composing and clerk copying, a mode perhaps described by the bibliographic classification of “jottings.”²⁹⁸ Though sometimes called “annotations” in scholarship, prompt marks do not function as comment, summary, or interpretation of a text, but as commands that link the text to a host of external (not only mental) actions. In etymological terms, prompters’ jottings do not *add* text in the form of the same genre, as in the *an-* of annotation; they render, translate, and link through an intermediary genre, this loose repertoire of marks.

Prompt notes do bear relations to other kinds symbols on the script. They interact with prose stage directions, which they often emphasize and extend, though each remains a distinct zone of text. Under the prompter’s jottings, some stage directions were underlined (actors’ entrances and exits), some ignored (qualities of speech); while others were translated from their narrative style (*wigwams on fire*) into practicable steps (*ready calcium*).²⁹⁹ Yet prompt marks depart from stage directions as they comprise something approaching a code system which, unlike stage directions, is not legible to a broad community of readers (nor even to all theatre workers). These markings also interweave with, while they should be differentiated from *paratexts*, the writings and graphics outside text-proper, which in the most elaborate formulation by Gérard Genette, refer to the printed matter encountered by *readers* that influences the making of meaning.³⁰⁰ In prompting, a paratext does not function as a “threshold of interpretation,” as Genette defines the category, but it becomes integrated within the chains of signals. Some pieces of print paratexts were used by prompters before the show (such as the cast list); others were

²⁹⁸ Beal, *Dictionary*, 216.

²⁹⁹ Zongxin Feng and Dan Shen, “The Play Off the Stage: the Writer-Reader Relationship in Drama,” *Language and Literature* 10, no.1 (February 2001):79-99, <http://lal.sagepub.com/content/10/1/79>. The article contrasts stage directions’ “utilitarian” references to the “real world” (stage work) against the fictive world inside drama, a bifurcation helpful to contemplations of ordinary reading, but perhaps less to analyses of practical reading.

³⁰⁰ Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*.

relevant during the show (such as act and scene divisions); while many paratexts, such as prefaces and printer colophons, were irrelevant and hence ignored.

Prompt notes encompass a wide array of kinds of marks, from ordinary words to arcane symbolism, which are organized in particular relations—relations between mark and playtext, one mark and another, and mark and prompter. The eclectic assemblage was nonetheless handled in a consistent way. In its range of kinds of marks, and the method of “reading” the full text, the social and material semiotics of promptbooks seem unique (besides seeming inadequately studied or defined). Though all promptbooks bore markings, these varied along several axes: kind, location, and quantity. Harby’s bore fewer marks, while Seymour’s and Becks’s more typically carried copious notations, as did many fully-manuscript specimens. The Harby copy represents a peculiar blend of promptbook and acting-copy format, one of the maverick specimens of the era that make mischief of our generalizations: it contains more marks within the *playtext* (the recto), the zone used more often by actors when they marked their copies. (See appendixes A and C.) Most prompters, in contrast, made only sparse marks on the playtext, while writing elaborate notes on the uncluttered blank pages (as is evident on appendix E). On those latter prompt pages, notes were more legible, but they also required an exacting mode of “reading” across a two-page spread, not linearly, but by a zig-zag course. In terms of the *kinds* of marks, promptbooks contained diverse representational modes: words, phrases, numbers, familiar symbols, unusual symbols, and pictographs. The marks covered linguistic and non-linguistic, iconic, indexical, and conventional signs (symbols). In the *Nick* specimens, the markings reflect common practices—as long as we include inconsistency as one of those practices.

Perhaps the most common mark across all backstage copies was negative—excising

dialogue, stage directions, and paratext (such as scene/act numbers), since each production drastically transformed the play content, even from earlier shows in a tour. As a music historian summarized, “prompter’s books are often a maze of sections cut from one performance and restored or altered in another.”³⁰¹ Like other marks in the loose repertoire, deleting was indicated in certain ways, often by framing and X-ing the passage in tidy lines, though sometimes less tidily, as on one page of the Harby book (appendix C). Many prompters replaced or substituted text. In the Harby book, some markings merely correct the numerous scribal errors, such as a *though* instead of Nathan’s Quaker *thou*, while a few substituted longer passages. Almost all promptbooks changed words in dialogue or prior stage direction (from the playwright’s manuscript, printed directions, and earlier prompt notes). Harby’s also has inserted speech, notably one comic soliloquy which is written out on the prompt page (in which the peddler Dodge recalls his swindling an ugly woman in the sale of a wig). Printed texts were not more sacrosanct (fixed, or precious as a playwright’s creation) than hand-written texts.³⁰² Plays by luminary authors were also transmogrified, as described in the plethora of studies of Shakespeare promptbooks. The *content* of these deletions has been germane to page-to-stage analyses, aiming to reconstruct public taste, aesthetic ethos, stage practices, or—in a study of nineteenth-century productions of *As You Like It*—the narcissism ostensibly peculiar to actresses.³⁰³ The *form* of prompting marks, though, also reveals the practice of handling promptbooks itself, the peculiar mode of writing and reading them.

³⁰¹ Susan L. Porter, “English-American Interaction in American Musical Theatre at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” *American Music* 4, no.1 (Spring, 1986): 12, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3052181>.

³⁰² Kate Mattacks, “‘A Woyage o’ Diskivery’: Thomas J. Williams’ *The Peep Show Man* and the Victorian Performative Text,” *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 53-62. Mattacks compares the “skeletal” text of a Lord Chamberlain submission, the “fixed” text of a Lacy edition, and the “performative” transformations in a provincial production book for one play, revealing a wide mutability of text.

³⁰³ Shakespeare promptbooks are taken up by: Stern, *Documents*; Chartier, *Publishing Drama*; and William Carson “*As You Like It* and the Stars: Nineteenth-Century Promptbooks,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 43, no 2 (April 1957): 117-127.

One crucial element in the repertoire of marks was the relatively ordinary (meaning widely legible) word or phrase—specifically, imperatives to the prompter to do something, or to signal another operative to do something. “See,” meant something like *make sure that* or *get*, as in “see torches” in Harby’s book. “Ready” served the same function, although it suggests an *earlier* preparation—what W. W. Greg called “anticipatory,” to be executed minutes before the corresponding scene on stage.³⁰⁴ (See “Ready shouts” and “Ready to fire” in appendixes D and E.) Another term, “ring,” provoked a backstage signal, reminding the prompter to ring a bell, which would activate others to play music, according to a 1960s study. But when the phrase reads, “ring for quick act drop,” or “ring slow curtain,” it meant that the prompter would signal an operative to maneuver a drop or curtain. A different kind of word was the proper names of characters; prompters often listed character names at the top of an act or scene, to bid his assistant (referred to as a “call boy”), to summon performers. That call used the names of characters rather than persons, and summoned performers in one bloc, even if each entered at a separate moment. This top-of-scene call list often lies angled, rather than in a column—one of the inscrutable idiosyncrasies in the genre of prompt marks (see appendix D).

Although most of these words, as well as the marks, seem culturally neutral, social nuances leak through even this workaday function. This hint of cultural resonance is apparent in the commands for Indians’ non-verbal, aggressive utterance. In general, whites *yell* or *shout*, while Indians *whoop*, or produce *war-whoops* (as in the note in the tree sketch in appendix B). In Medina’s published version Indians do *yell* twice, and in most versions, the wildest white figure, Ralph Stackpole, does also *whoop* (and more wildly yet he cries *cockadoodle doo*). But Stackpole’s sylvan sounds are written as speech, *Whoop!*, not as stage directions (*Whoops*

³⁰⁴ W. W. Greg, *Stage Plots, Actors’ Parts, Prompt Books*, vol. 1 of *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (1931; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 217.

without)—in playscript hierarchies, his is a more individual, chosen whoop than those cried out by the Indian mob. While the racial lexemes vary across all versions of *Nick*, from Bird’s novel to British license submissions, they reach further complexities in promptbooks. In Seymour’s promptbook, the off-stage Indian *whoop* in Medina’s printed stage directions was translated into *yell*, a less racially distinct term, written on the facing prompt-page. Harby’s text shifts in a different direction: what the scrivener prescribed as *noise of Indians without* in the playtext became *Ready Indians to whoop* and then *Indians whoop without* in the prompt notes.³⁰⁵ Culturally, these discrepancies suggest a range of conceptions of Indian utterances (or of white impersonator utterances). In the smaller culture of prompting, they demonstrate that prompt marks overrode stage directions when prompters coordinated the show.

Besides words, most promptbook marks took the form of abstract symbols, such as hash-mark (#) and variations on a circle (⊗⊘⊙). These symbols distinguish the promptbook as a unique species both relative to the life of a playscript and relative to workaday documents from other fields such as business accounting (which assemble smaller symbolic menus). These marks were quick to draw, easy to replicate, visibly differentiable from one another (so that one wouldn’t confuse commands for *music* and *curtain*), and recognizable to quickly scanning eyes, so long as that scanner knew the code. The symbols often seem more recognizable (to me) than does prose, even when scribbled by more reckless hands. These markings warrant a thorough analysis, toward which I lay just preliminary observations here. A few of the symbols remained flexible, not yoked to one particular stage direction, but assigned to it by one prompter. The dotted-circle ⊙ has been identified as signaling a whistle for music, and so it did in Harby’s, but in Becks’s it also did the duty for “shouts,” and in Seymour’s it was applied further to “dark

³⁰⁵ Harby, *Nick*, act 3, scene 2. The “Whoop,” a racially-marked onomatopoeia, was used in one early *Nick* advertisement: “Whoop! Indians About!” (Philadelphia) *Public Ledger* April 11, 1839, 3, America’s Historical Newspapers, Readex.

stage.”³⁰⁶ Thus one effect could be represented by various symbols—even within the same promptbook. In Becks’s, \emptyset marked *gun* or *shout* (which sometimes took ∇), and *shriek* was indicated by # or a double-slashed circle, alternatives that helped distinguish instances of sound both close in time and close on the same page. (See appendix E.) Prompters sometimes varied marks for the sake of variety—which helped recognition—rather than to guarantee a consistent meaning.

The whole repertoire of promptbook marks do not amount to a notational “system,” given the internal diversity (among other semiotic criteria too arcane to repeat here).³⁰⁷ Granted, in some prompting styles, a sub-set of symbols expanded from a core, especially the circle: dotted at the center, x’d, slashed diagonally, double-slashed, or two circles joined by a tendon. Still, the set never came near the parsimony of musical scoring, or semaphores, or shorthand. Instead, prompters culled from notational systems elsewhere in society, making an *assemblage* unique to theatre—one of the instances in which the arena of theatre refracted common media (specifically textual materials and practices). Symbols were imported from common notation systems. Even the young dollar sign \$ appears on a few promptbooks, though not in a *Nick*. Most obviously, prompters drew numbers from arithmetic, generally using them in normal sequence, 1, 2, 3, and onward, which, given their placement in prompt-notes, seem to have designated musical tunes or sets of actors. Whatever the designation, a number on the promptbook was usually coordinated with a separate document—a list of musical tunes, or a “slip” naming the group of characters due on stage. (Scene and act numbers were already inscribed on the playwright’s manuscript or printed edition, often still in ordinal form—act third, scene second—although these too were

³⁰⁶ Edward A. Langhans, “Research Opportunities in Early Promptbooks,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 18, no. 1 (March, 1966): 74, JSTOR, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3205123>

³⁰⁷ Of the many analyses of semiotics, a lesser-cited one that pertains to drama (relative to notation systems and schemes) is Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York: Hackett Publishing, 1976), 127-176.

sometimes crossed out or inserted.). In earlier eras, prompters had culled from astrology and musical symbols, marks that had receded by the era of *Nick of the Woods*, for reasons beyond my ken.³⁰⁸ Letters were almost never used as a form of sequencing, perhaps because stage position acronyms already dotted the text: LUE, RC, and so on. A tall “W” was ubiquitous, an initial for the word whistle (*W*), or, in precise translation, a synecdoche for the longer event: the prompter whistled a signal to operatives, who then lowered the curtain and changed the scene. The *W*, an instance of the mark bibliography classifies as “graph,”³⁰⁹ was always written tall, surpassing the lines on lined paper, and it was emphasized by some means; in the Becks book, that emphasis changes from underline surrounds it in frames in varying shapes—triangle, circle, or square.³¹⁰

The prompters not only wrote, but drew, or in other words, graphic elements were part of prompt jottings. One pictorial drawing is the sketch of trees on a prompt-page of the Harby book (appendix B), though scene drawings were not often inscribed mid-play. Other drawn marks, lines, shapes, and diagrams or “maps” entered what Kathleen Conlin calls the “vocabulary” of prompt-marks.³¹¹ Underlining was ubiquitous, and underlines themselves were underscored in varied ways, to amplify emphasis; the Boston Museum prompter Pitman drew wavy lines, but others took advantage of red lead or ink. Two common pictographs (symbols resembling real-world objects) were the manicule (the pointing finger) and the arrow. Neither were representational depictions (icons) of the *thing* in itself; rather, they borrowed the image of the pointing hand or arrow to signify, more or less, “notice this,” or “now this.”³¹² As a symbol, the pointing-hand had been, between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, possibly “the most

³⁰⁸ Langhans, “Research Opportunities.”

³⁰⁹ Beal, *Dictionary*, 178.

³¹⁰ For a more prestigious specimen that bears the *W* and other marks, see Charles Macready, Charles H. Shattuck, and William Shakespeare, *Mr. Macready Produces “As You Like It”: A Prompt-book Study*, ed. Charles H. Shattuck (Urbana, IL: Beta Phi Mu, 1962).

³¹¹ Conlin, “Performance Documentation,” 119.

³¹² Semiotically, the manicule and arrow are *intermediary* referents, or abstract symbols derived from icon symbols or pictographs.

common produced both for and by readers in the margins of manuscripts and printed books,³¹³ according to one of its historians; whence its easy slide into the workaday mode of writing and reading in theatre production. In promptbooks, however, the pointing hand shifted function from its original job of flagging new sections, and it migrated location from margin to prompt-page. (And reader's marginalia bears some resemblance to, but differs functionally from promptnotes.) The schematic manicule varied, as all marks did, in neatness and style. The scribe Davis dandified his with a ruffled cuff (appendix A); the Becks book merely suggested the cuff, without fashionable scalloping (two in appendix E); yet most left the hand naked. Some manicules are rendered so minimally (and perhaps hastily) they are barely recognizable as a pointing hand and approach an abstract symbol. The arrow, meanwhile, also came in varied styles, minimalist to feathered. While the manicule refers to the significance of the real-life pointing hand ("look"), the arrow as an object never means *notice*, and so on the page it works as a conventional assignation (symbol) without real-world reference (icon). Still, marks on the frontier drama remind us that feathered arrows may have brought Indians to mind: in the Becks book, the arrow points to a moment involving Indians, and this is the book's only feathered arrow. It is a long arrow, too, its shaft stretching from prompt-page, across the gutter, into the playtext, when prompt marks almost never crossed adjacent pages. Both manicule and arrow were ready-made, having long been abstracted into the social system of symbols, and permeated print culture (including printed plays), but they were adapted for the function of prompting and styled by the individual prompter.

The notations gathered by prompters emerged from a large, international network of signs and practices with symbols. But codes from textual culture did not cross over *en masse*.

³¹³ William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 29 and chap. 2.

Not all common symbols were eligible for re-assigning: religious shapes do not appear, not even a cross-like shape (as in the footnote dagger). Others were semiotically risky—the question mark would have cast doubt on the imperatives that constitute prompt notation (*fire canon?*). The marks developed in a society that was formalizing and multiplying its signage, in public (street markers) and specialized communications systems (shorthand, semaphore, telegraph, and morse codes). Cultural scholars have argued that all modes of symbolizing were intensified by market capitalism, with its reliance on third-term monetary value as mediator in exchange.³¹⁴ Though there was long precedent behind the prompter’s chain of signals in general and some marks in particular (the slashed virgule and “ring” command), arguably this nineteenth-century escalation of working symbols in the larger culture affected mark-making in the sphere of theatre. Symbolic practices presumably were transformed in the industrial era, as businesses affected school curricula, as print material abounded, and time and spatial measurements became standard and pervasive. While archive specimens suggest that the symbolic shifts in the larger society influenced promptbooks *later* (especially in the element of stage set diagrams), a more general point is that the phenomenon of promptbooks, and theatre’s workaday practices, speak to interdisciplinary questions about the historical transformation of symbolic practices that cross cultural spheres.

Prompt marks changed more discernibly in response to the specific cultural forms of theatre, in both dramatic mode and stage technology. The outdoor sound effects of frontier melodrama (and adventure melodrama in general) raised the need for a quickly-recognizable assortment of signs, all referring to sound, but each to a distinct sound: thunder, gun-shot, horse-hooves, and other aural byproducts of lively action. These of course change in response to

³¹⁴ For a discussion of the implications of finance on literary symbolism, see Michael T. Gilmore, *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 15.

developments in material culture in society, as new guns bring new gunshot sounds, as well as inside theatre. Advances in lighting widened the range of possible gradations. In the antebellum era, Harby's indicates only "½ lighting," and only in a few instances; decades later, the Becks book for the same play modulates light both more frequently and more specifically: *Very dark, Gradually darken, Lights down + Calcium on* (the latter inducing either moonlight or a river cataract).³¹⁵ The Becks promptbook notes, in fact, are oriented almost entirely to atmosphere—music, sound, and light—which had become more nuanced and expressive.

Reading Promptbooks

As prompting required a particular mode of *writing*, it also involved a particular mode of *reading*, and even a distinct mode in the spectrum of workaday reading.³¹⁶ Prompters "read" promptbooks as work; like much labor reading, the task is intermediary, *toward* another end, not an end in itself, not even for extracting information, as in the reading of train schedules. The work of reading to orchestrate a show did transpire in linear real-time, but it operated in multiple timelines, or temporalities. Before Jibbenainosay/Nick rode the flaming canoe down the waterfall, the Seymour prompter read the warnings—what Greg labeled "anticipatory" or "proleptic" signals—to "Ready gong to start boat and red fire."³¹⁷ Misreading, and hence missing a signal, brought weighty repercussions. All these aspects distinguish prompting from other modes of reading, even those also serious (for newspapers) or workaday (for business letters). This visual alternation, from blank page to playtext page, co-evolved with the prompters' concrete handling of the book, laying it flat on the "prompt table." It also corresponded to the prompter's mode of *reading* the book—not the conventional linear left-to-right eye-motion (as when laypeople read a play), but scanning zig-zag between play-text and prompt-notes, to

³¹⁵ MS. notes on Medina, *Nick* (Becks promptbook), 12, 11, and 22.

³¹⁶ Feng and Dan, "The Play Off the Stage."

³¹⁷ Greg, *Stage Plots*, 217.

coordinate stage action and backstage preparations. (See appendix E.) This double-spread design spared the prompter having to flip a page forward and backward while summoning actors and preparing sound effects for one episode. In those spots where the Harby prompts do spill over to the next page, a little reminder was added to “turn over” or “see over.” That zig-zag scan followed no consistent pattern, the way it does when a conductor reads the two axes of melody and chord on a musical score. The trajectory inevitably varied according to the intensity of stage effects in a given moment. For example, a prompter would “read” the command for music from left page to right here:

Prompt-page	Playtext
#music#	# (<i>Music. Exits over bridge.</i>)

That is: As Ralph exits to save an infant from a panther, the orchestra should play a suspenseful melody; hence the prompter must cue the musical director. (See appendix E.) The visual spacing of pages provoked prompters to an array of tactics to produce a *legible* layout of prompt-commands—some tactics common, some *ad hoc*. In general, prompters marked a brief symbol within the playtext (the right-side page), such as #, indicating *when* something should happen, and wrote a parallel note on the prompt-page (the facing left page), # *Distant Thunder*, elaborating *what* should happen. If this was relatively common, though, it was still far from universal, so variations abound even among the small proportion of surviving books.

Prompt notes were links in a chain of signals, a way-station between the play-proper and the prompter’s bodily action, across multiple linguistic registers. In the playtext, for example, came the mention of an intense action and perhaps a direction for music. This textual trigger linked to a set of prompt codes: a hash (pound) symbol # inserted near the playtext, and a mirror

prompt code on the interpolated page. The mark on the prompt page was more elaborate, usually including both symbol and word, such as #music#. A similar set would appear for scene changes (the tall *W*), curtain (indicating quick or slow drop), or gun-shot sounds. The combination prompt-note signaled the prompter to signal—whistle, whisper, bell, or gesture—to other operatives, who, interpreting the signal, would then perform the effect. The prompter harnessed an array of non-textual signals to others, some through an artifact, as “ring” referred to a bell, but many from his body. According to a Boston Museum actress, “every movement of his head had meaning for someone.”³¹⁸ The call list mentioned above was sometimes depicted by a number, which triggered the prompter to dispatch the call boy, holding a slip of paper inscribed with the set of character names, to fetch performers from the green room; that mark was followed a page or so below by a different symbol (often a slashed virgule, which word-processing cannot duplicate), which provoked the prompter to make some gesture, whatever it was, signaling an actress to enter just then.³¹⁹ The playscript was integrated in a system of bodies and other objects, notably such devices as bell and whistle. Off-stage group sounds, such as shouts, needed a group to make them on time—regulated by the prompt *Ready Shouts*. Some prompters generated an effect themselves, vocalizing baby cries or clapping coconut shells for hoof-beats,³²⁰ but most symbols triggered a chain of signals passing through the prompter’s body and to others along the production circuit, a system of paper, specialized marks, multiple segmented operatives, in a total, if not entirely systematic, system. Prompters and other operatives needed to learn the codes (though, again, there is little mention of how anyone did).

Thus promptbooks were the busiest of playscript incarnations, cluttered with markings

³¹⁸ Ryan, *Old Boston Museum*, 137. Ryan recounts a prompter renowned for these talents.

³¹⁹ On the slashed virgule (for Renaissance documents), see Langhans, “Research Opportunities,” 74.

³²⁰ David Collinson, *The Sound of Theatre: From the Ancient Greeks to the Modern Digital Age* (Eastbourne, UK: PLASA, 2008), 50.

representing the amalgam of theatre's media—the movement of human bodies (and sometimes animals), sound, music, light, and properties. Even the *lack* of movement was marked, in silent pause, freeze, or tableau. Other script copies contained smaller fractions of the whole. Still, promptbooks represented only a sub-set, omitting most small acts or modulations, and commenting little about *how* actors performed on stage—amounting to only “half the event” of the performance, according to one frustrated 1980s scholar.³²¹ No writing recorded the total show; nor did one person orchestrate it alone. The most complex stage effects in *Nick* do not appear in handwritten commands on the *Nick* promptbooks, so there is no mark representing Medina's flaming canoe scene (discussed in the prior chapter). Promptbooks leave out costume lists and other inventories involved in preparation, which presumably were relegated to separate pages or oral exchanges. The signals in the promptbook coordinated with an array of backstage signals, many by speech, gestures, or sound (bell or whistle), few by paper (the “call slip”); they were often the basis of actors' copies, and interacted with musical notes, lists of familiar tunes or patchwork of scores—which for *Nick* left no traces. In terms of communication, these qualities were presumed understood by the co-worker; the omissions represent the tacit distribution and coordination of knowledge and responsibility in theatre production.

While incomplete as a recording of the live event, the promptbook bore traces of the entire project, containing elements relevant *before* or *outside* the show. The Harby copy includes a *dramatis personae* list, a piece of paratext often left out of handwritten copies, since its information pertains only to the early casting phase. The list specifies ages, notes that five Indians do not speak but engage in “business,” and describes characters with epithets. Ralph is “the ring-tailed squealer of the Old Salt River”—an addition more common in promotional texts, playbills or published plays, than in practical documents. In the casting phase, a prompter using a

³²¹ Conlin, “Performance Documentation,” 123.

published script adapted the printed *Dramatis Personae*, jotting new actors' names in the blank space, while ignoring the names of past actors—but the extraneous printed information, which served other purposes, remained in the book. (In contrast, this extra matter would sometimes be cut out of archived playbooks.) Another pre-show mark was the scenery drawing, such as the Harby book ink drawing of three trees in various states of health, labeled with stage positions (LH and RH), opposite the playtext for the top of Scene Two, that reads “The woods—An Oak Tree conspicuous” (where Nathan and Roland rest). (See appendix B.) Before the development of schematic stage-set diagrams at the end of the century, a minority of promptbooks included dimensional drawings of scenery, rendered in varying degrees of drawing aptitude. (Pictures were also sometimes inserted after a production in a souvenir book, but this was never done for *Nick*.)³²²

Although the promptbook was highly constrained by function—its use for stage production—that function did not wholly determine style. For example, promptbooks were given separate, spacious title pages. The Seymour prompter wrote out the play title by hand, in a tall serif font, on the new burlap cover. The writers often bothered to give a stylistic distinction, drafting the title with more calligraphic flourish than the rest of the book and borrowing from print typography, as manifest on the 1858 Lord Chamberlain licenser submission (appendix I). Even in workaday copies, title pages were the respectable faces of the play. Although these represented workaday, highly constrained reflexes, rather than conscientious literary craft, promptbooks still reveal stylistic choices made by some admixture of the larger culture's symbolic practices and common theatre practices (sifted through individual workers).

Actors' Parts

Actors' copies served one principal function: to guide actors in memorizing the lines for a

³²² Conlin, “Performance Documentation,” 117. Conlin cites Charles Shattuck's category of souvenir promptbooks.

theatrical role. They were textual mnemonic aids, written out, handled, and read in a particular mode toward this short-term aim. While prompting was a unique kind of activity, the task of memorizing text, and mnemonic devices *in general* were familiar, when church, school, and varied jobs involved rote recitation. Yet the rhythm and quantity of perpetual memorizing (at least for stock actors), and the substance of fictional texts, differed from, say, children learning catechism or clerks memorizing prices. Instead of the term *memorizing*, theater workers called the act *studying*, perhaps importing the term from school—which sometimes could be understood as contemplative, intellectual study, though that connotation appears less often in references from the late melodrama era. In format, the handwritten parts were analogous to school “cheat sheets” and sundry other mnemonic devices. The task resembled other textual labors in other sectors of society, and perhaps it shared their techniques, though these are scarcely mentioned. Actors, if they were not helping one another, at least witnessed their colleagues studying in the theatre, and probably gleaned techniques from shop talk, so to speak. Such informal, social apprenticeship constituted theatre education—and textual customs were a significant piece of that training.

Historians have reconstructed the *quantities* of actors memorizing parts (in terms of time and number of lines). Rosemarie Bank highlights the importance of memory, quoting primary source accounts of actors’ grueling schedules; another theatre historian compares two eras in France (finding the burden more onerous in the nineteenth-century than in Molière’s era).³²³ The pressures on this mental work were manifest in theatre regulations, which fined actors who still

³²³ Bank, *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 95; John Golder, “Molière and the Circumstances of Seventeenth-Century Rehearsal Practice,” *Theatre Research International*, 33, no. 3 (October 2008): 250-262.

relied on a script at the final rehearsal.³²⁴ But the *process* of memorizing also invites historical consideration. Practices of memorizing, which entwine with contemporaneous epistemology and pedagogy, vary over time and culture, especially in relation to text. What were the ideas about memorizing across society in general, and how were those adapted for theatre? The anecdotes in theatre lore refer mostly to failures (“drying up” or not knowing one’s lines), or to naturally prodigious memories. Some hints of the technique come from theatre advice books targeting amateurs, one of which outlines a sequence of writing, reading, and recitation:

The best plan I think, of committing a part to memory, is to write it out from the book yourself, or copy the written part given to you; this will gradually impress the words upon your mind; after this, read it over aloud before you sleep at night, and repeat what you know of it, and practice the same exercise in the morning when you first awake.³²⁵

Commercially published anonymous advice to amateurs suggests that actors used multiple steps, and that some may have copied text as one tactic. The portrait culled from this advice and other anecdotes represents the actor working in solitude, migrating between theatre and home, different from prompting’s anchored location. Even if the task was often isolated, though, it was nonetheless social, a piece of communal textual work within a specialized sphere. The playwright and later actress Ana Cora Mowatt recalled that at a rehearsal of her *Fashion*, “every actor held to his part, to which he constantly referred.”³²⁶

The task of memorizing is yet another mode of reading, widening the spectrum of reading in the life of the playscript—distinct from linear, continual leisure reading, and also from the prompter’s two-page, zig-zag scanning. A fusion of mind and body, memorizing is a skill, and

³²⁴ Leman Thomas Rede, *Road to the Stage; or, The Performer’s Preceptor* (London: Joseph Smith, 1827), excerpt in *Victorian Theatre: The Theatre in Its Time*, ed. Russell Jackson (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1989), 86-88.

³²⁵ *The Amateur; or, Guide to the Stage* (Philadelphia: Fisher & Brother, n.d.), 17, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

³²⁶ Quoted in Bernard Hewitt, *Theatre US: 1668-1957* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 135.

hence inevitably varied among actors—anecdotes of poor abilities or lapsed memory abound, and publishers saw a need for advice on memorizing, if only for amateurs (in booklet sections titled *How to Study*, *How to Read*, and *How to Memorize*).³²⁷ The burden was also uneven, since a star repeating a signature role, as Proctor did thousands of times in *Nick of the Woods*, was not rushed to study, as was the stock performer. The stock actor purportedly devoted six hours to learn 300 to 500 lines every workday, those rates varying by dramatic mode (fewer for tragedy, more—even thrice more—for comedy).³²⁸ A journalist’s exposé of the actress’s plight described the hypothetical actress of one type, the Walking Lady, who eats only at midnight, and even then “sits up till daylight, studying” a role in a play chosen on short notice by a star.³²⁹ A performer could be assigned a role at the last minute, whence the idiom “to wing it,” from studying lines between “wings” backstage—as purportedly happened in the 1860s in Albany, New York, when the lead actor of *Nick* fell sick, and his replacement “winged it,” to legendary success.³³⁰

The nomenclature for traditional actors’ copies developed for handwritten, not print, format. The most common term, *part*, slid across several denotations: it referred to the physical booklet, the role (speech and action), and the character as a dramatic persona or psyche. *Side* sometimes refers to a segment, one page, but sometimes seems synonymous with *part*.³³¹ Sporadically one sees the term *book* in first-hand writings of the era, while *part-book*, *character*

³²⁷ Advertisement for *The Actor’s Hand-Book and Guide to the Stage for Amateurs* (London: Dicks, n.d.) in *Turpin’s Ride to York*, by H. M. Milner (London: Dicks, n.d.), n.p., New York Public Library.

³²⁸ For rates, see Rede in *Victorian Theatre*, 88, and Hewitt, *Theatre USA*, 153.

³²⁹ T. W. Robertson, “Theatrical Types No.4” *Illustrated Times* (London), February 13, 1864, 105, quoted in Jackson, *Victorian Theatre*, 114. The actress scenario alludes to Richard Shiel’s *Evadne* (1819).

³³⁰ Don B. Wilmeth, *The Language of American Popular Entertainment: A Glossary of Argot, Slang, and Terminology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, Press, 1981), 294; John S. Kendall, *The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theatre*, 523.

³³¹ Beal, *Dictionary*, 285. Beal dates “side” to the eighteenth century. “Part” and “side” are treated interchangeably in Trapido, Langhans, and Brandon, *International Dictionary of Theatre*, 625.

part, and *dialogue part* were probably coined later in bibliography and library cataloging.³³² The inconsistent terminology today reflects the relatively lower value of the documents, which except for associations with major theatre figures, are hardly trafficked in the rare book trade. When they are, it is as part of a kit, that is, accompanying the promptbook or master script.

While sharing some features with mnemonic devices elsewhere in society, the handwritten actors' playscripts took particular forms. Although no known handwritten parts for *Nick* survived, other specimens suggest the prevailing formats. Most extant parts from the period take the form of short and wide pamphlets, like vertically sliced notebooks; smaller ones stayed together as loose folded pages (some a single fold), while larger parts were stitched. (See appendix F.) The half-book format, continuous since at least the prior century,³³³ made parts portable, since they could be rolled to fit in pockets or purses which suited actors' peripatetic habits (and some archival specimens are still rolled). Or it was perpetuated by custom: even a mid-twentieth-century practitioner glossary would still define the side as "usually written or typed on half sheets."³³⁴ As with promptbooks, the parts' paper varied in color, thickness, and lines, and, as stitches varied, though many small roles (one or two pages) were left unbound. Even when separate hands copied the several parts of one play, the theatre sometimes wrapped them in identical covers, reinforcing their identity as a unified set of parts, though one not necessarily matching the promptbook.

Actors' copies did not reproduce the entire playtext, as early twenty-first century actors would expect to encounter. While the industrial-era parts differ from their early modern predecessors at the level of book format, as codices rather than scrolls, at the level of text, they

³³² The Library of Congress catalogue system lists no subject header for actors' parts; in other institutions they fall under the category "promptbook," grouped in a play "kit," or are designated by *ad hoc* terms.

³³³ Stern, *Rehearsals*, 253. Stern quotes Garrick's technique of cutting a folded sheet writing paper (foolscap).

³³⁴ Trapido, Langhans, and Brandon, *International Dictionary of Theatre*, 788.

resemble early modern parts more closely than twentieth century actors' scripts.³³⁵ If the promptbook *added* text, actors' copies *reduced* the playtext. The opening paratext, on a cover if there was one but otherwise at the top of the first page, was the play title and character role, indicating sometimes the theatre, rarely a date, and almost never an author's name. Still, some copyists bothered to write the title in spacious calligraphy rather than the usual perfunctory handwriting. Within the playtext, they reproduced little besides the lines of the actor's one role, supplemented by the minimal other bits that would, ostensibly, aid memorization, notably cue phrases and reminders of stage action. Only the final phrase of a play, the closing "End" or "Finis," seems extraneous. The rest, to outsider's eyes, read as severed non-sequiturs, like a modern literature experiment. This becomes clear in the following juxtaposition of the same scene, where Telie intercedes in the villain's shooting Roland. At left is the full playtext, and at right, my speculative rendition of Telie's part:

<p>Braxley. Never! She is in my power; and thus I secure her mine! (<i>Fires pistol at Roland, and exit. Telie throws herself before him, and receives the shot on L.</i>) Telie. Thou art saved, dear Roland! Roland. Generous girl, for me you bleed. My worthless life has cost thee thine. Look up, sweet maid, look up! Telie. 'Tis happiness to die for one we love.³³⁶</p>	<p>_____ secure her mine! (<u>forward; pistol fire; ??fall</u>) Thou art saved, dear Roland! _____ look up! 'Tis happiness to die for one we love.</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

All lines except cues were skipped, and the cue itself was compacted into the final few words. The omitted words of the cue were indicated by ellipses, which took various styles: broken or solid straight line, solid underscore, or wavy arcs, though never the modern triple-dots (...). Cue

³³⁵ On early modern actors parts, see Greg, *Stage Plots*, and Stern, *Documents of Performance*.

³³⁶ Medina, *Nick* (New York: Samuel French, n.d.), act 3, scene 4. Punctuation in original.

lines did not indicate which character was speaking, only the last words of what that character said; in fact the conventional actor's copy left out all character labels altogether, even the one of the role it represented. The actress spotted a cue line by the ellipses; between cues, her lines were the only complete phrases on the page. Manuscript cue structure highlights the *visual* dimension of workaday texts, a feature discussed more by other disciplines analyzing texts in non-cultural arenas than in theatre history.³³⁷ The only stage directions reproduced were those pertaining directly to one's role. So streamlined, the part's size, and hence the time needed to memorize it, became easy to gauge quickly, and was measured by a unique unit, called "length," a fixed number of lines (about 40). That magnitude, while important to performers hoping for large parts, was rarely marked on the booklet itself. Through this truncation, text lost ordinary linguistic and literary significance. The lack of linguistic meaning diminished the survival of parts, which bore less symbolic value than even more ephemeral documents, such as posters.

The format of the document corresponded not only to the task of memorizing, but to the principles of theatre work. Discussing Restoration-era rehearsals, Tiffany Stern describes the ethos in which the finished play joined detachable parts, all learned and practiced in isolation, a mode she calls (pejoratively) "part-based thinking."³³⁸ This model is antithetical to the modern view, where parts are integrated, and hence the whole requires lengthy ensemble rehearsals. In *Nick's* early stage career, the "part" ethos largely prevailed, though perhaps involving more collective rehearsing than before. A nineteenth-century commentator complained, "many pieces (MSS chiefly) were acted which the performers who played in them never had a chance of hearing read, nor any means of knowing the drift or object of the story, beyond the scene in

³³⁷ For an analysis of the visual features of functional texts in three contemporary arenas (hospital, library, and railroad), see Andrew P. Carlin, "Pro Forma Arrangements: the Visual Availability of Textual Artefacts," *Visual Studies* 18, no. 1 (2003): 6-20, doi: 10.1080/1472586032000100038

³³⁸ Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare*, 285-7.

which their own parts lay.”³³⁹

The part mentality, though, while aesthetically troublesome by later standards, did reflect a standard of skill and a degree of agency among actors. The truncation of the cue to a mere few words without character name demanded that actors attend to *what* was said rather than to *who* spoke, requiring careful listening. Also, the vague limning of action left relative leeway to performers’ discretion. The most distinct lexeme in actors’ sides was “business,” or “bus” for short, which evolved from the Renaissance term “busy,”³⁴⁰ and signaled the actor to perform non-verbal gestures in tune with both the scene and the persona. The term “business” was a placeholder, indicating *when*, not *what* precisely the actor should do; the specific *what* could be unique to the performer and even proprietary.³⁴¹ The custom left to performers the design of small actions, especially one’s self-contained gestures (in contrast to the controlling stage directions of many modernist scripts). Since it did not involve backstage action or multiple performers, “business” appeared rarely in prompt copies, but, since it indicated when a performer should express a particular role, it was ubiquitous in actors’ copies.

The truncated format was economic in several senses of the term, though it lacked exchange value.³⁴² Even for the theatres using published editions of *Nick of the Woods*, hand copying was perhaps still cheaper than purchasing print copies for the full cast, while the streamlined half-booklet reduced labor. For the economy of memorizing, the textual reduction erased distracting visual clutter. Also, its dramatic meaninglessness prevented “piracy,” or the illicit importation of one theatre’s play to another house. In a later novel, when one character

³³⁹ “Personal Recollections,” quoted in Hewitt, *Theatre USA*, 153.

³⁴⁰ Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 40.

³⁴¹ On the autonomy of stage business, see the account of the main actor in *Our American Cousin*: George Taylor, *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), chap. 6.

³⁴² When publishers’ paratexts boasts of an “acting copy,” they refer to full-text MSS, not these conventional parts.

says the parts were easier to study from than full texts, his companion corrects the purely functional analysis with an economic one, explaining that the side “was supposed to prevent actors from duplicating a hit script and going off with it on their own.”³⁴³ Even if a renegade actor did purloin a copy, the truncated form made it difficult to extrapolate the full playtext from it. Sometimes actors owned their copy, rendering an informal monopoly to the role within a company (at least in England). But parts were usually loaned to actors, not rented or given, and after use, they were required to be returned to the prompter or manager. As an amateur advice book explains, “a written part will be handed to you. This you will take care of, and hand to the prompter or call boy, when the piece is withdrawn from the stage.”³⁴⁴ Thus one of the few pieces of paratext added to these otherwise minimalist copies was the phrase, “Return to Prompter” or “Property of” inscribed on covers (either phrase indicating merely that the prompter husbanded copies, which he did not legally own). “Property of” may have supplanted “return to” in later decades. One archived part for Leslie for a production of *Oliver Cromwell* bears the phrase “Property of Jo. Proctor, Esq.,” referring to the long-term star of *Nick of the Woods*, who sometimes ran his own theatre company (see appendix F).³⁴⁵ Even as property, the part’s value lay less in the single document itself than in the collected set. On one purported occasion, after other scripts were destroyed by fire, Medina allegedly reconstructing *The Last Days of Pompeii* from two actors’ parts, but this anecdote testified to her “unequaled” skill in writing, more than to the value of single parts.³⁴⁶

³⁴³ Rebecca James [James Elward], *House is Dark* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976, 135), quoted in *Oxford English Dictionary On-Line*, s.v. side I9c.

³⁴⁴ *The Amateur, or Guide to the Stage*, 14.

³⁴⁵ Actor’s part of Leslie in *Oliver Cromwell*, MS, Nineteenth Century Playbooks Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

³⁴⁶ According to the magazine, “the original copy of this drama [*Last Days of Pompeii*] was destroyed with the theatre—two parts only having been saved; these have served as a basis upon which to re-construct the piece, which Miss Medina, the unequalled dramatist, has succeeded in making the counterpart of the first.” “Theatricals,” *Ladies’ Companion*, May 1837, 50, American Periodicals Series, ProQuest.

Printed Actors' Parts

Handwriting constituted the small-scale reproduction of texts in theatre, as in all society, even after the integration of typewriting and mimeography by around 1890, though typewriting would largely supplant handwriting for much theatre copying.³⁴⁷ (The only surviving typewritten copies of *Nick* came in 1940 and 1960, as I discuss in chapter six.) Publishers increasingly urged theatres to buy or rent printed copies of plays for all roles, and indeed the existing actors' parts for *Nick* are full published scripts. A 1930s bibliographer, Rhodes, extrapolating from one English theatre's archives, concluded that the "scrip," as he called the actor's part, was an "old fashion" by the 1830s, "confined to small characters and to unprinted plays," since theatres bought a half dozen or dozen scripts for separate parts.³⁴⁸ Major theatre archival collections suggest otherwise, however, as they contain such streamlined parts from even the late-century typewriting era; indeed, several typewriting firms were accustomed to producing them.³⁴⁹ A convergence of factors suggest that printed actors' copies were typical more for *amateur* productions than commercial ones, at least in the US, although given the foggy provenance records it is hard to identify the productions associated with these *Nick* specimens.³⁵⁰ While print did not drastically alter the structure and semiotics of the promptbook, it produced an utterly new kind of actors' copies, more drastically rupturing the long tradition of their distinct format. Bearing the full text, a printed "part" was no longer partial, but whole; far from streamlined, it carried extraneous matter such as catalogues. Visually, print homogenized all character labels

³⁴⁷ Nicolas Barker notes that scribal continued until typewriting in *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book: Selected Essays* (London: British Library, 2003), 111; Granville, *Dictionary of Theatrical Terms*, s.v. part.

³⁴⁸ R. Crompton Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," *The Library*, series 4, no. 16 (1936): pt. 1, 94.

³⁴⁹ Numerous non-print parts can be found in Rare Books and Special Collections in the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, Princeton University Library, and the Harvard University Theatre Collection. Several are attributed to Rosenfield Typewriting (NY) and Mrs. Marshalls Typewriting Office (London), just two of such firms.

³⁵⁰ Factors include the economic status of amateur practitioners (enabling them to purchase scripts); the social class of alumni donating scripts to private-college collections (overlapping that of amateur theatre); the relatively small transformations to these copies; the frugality of commercial theatre; and publishers' stipulations, *inter alia*.

and dialogue lines, making it difficult to differentiate quickly one part from another. Thus script handlers developed devices to demarcate single roles. Most commonly, actors marked slashes, or ticks, alongside their lines (that is, alongside the left-justified character label), as was done on these copies of *Nick*. They also underlined their role's stage directions, which were difficult to spot in the small typeface and slim line spacing of cheaper publications. Since the copy was not streamlined around one role, only these flagging ticks, along with the character's name written on the cover, identify which role a copy was used for. From archive visits or records, I know of parts for the women leads Telie and Edith, Ralph, and the secondary male role Colonel Bruce and the Colonel's son, Big Tom.³⁵¹ I saw no parts for the lead role of Nathan/Nick.

One *Nick* was marked for two roles, both female leads Edith and Telie—slashed in opposite directions respectively, lest a memorizer confuse the two parts. In other specimens, the annotator distinguished by color rather than angle of the slash. Marking multiple roles could indicate that one performer played several roles, but in earnest productions, no one could both Telie and Edith, who appear together frequently. So the two-role copy was used (by the same or different performer) in separate productions, or else two performers shared a script for the same run. This doubling points to another rupture in convention: handwritten copies were dedicated to single roles, while printed copies could be shared by or repurposed for actors of separate roles. Full-text acting copies ruptured the fusion of dramatic part (role) from textual part (script copy).

Music

Theatrical music was in some ways integrated into theatre's wide nexus of texts beyond

³⁵¹ The *Nick* actors' copies, all based on Medina's version, are scattered. Of those I viewed: Ralph part in Modern Standard Drama volumes, University of Virginia Library (open stacks); Telie part, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Big Tom part, New York Public Library of Performing Arts, also in *Nineteenth Century English and American Drama*, microform (New Canaan, CT: Readex, n.d.); Telie/Edith part, Harvard Theatre Collection. The Edith part (not viewed), is in Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library (Julia Gardner, Reference and Instruction Librarian, University of Chicago, email message to author, January 21, 2010).

the script: musicians were regulated to posted rules, and musical directors were credited on bills (though musicians went unnamed). The directors interacted with prompters, who cued music during the show (by whistle, flashing footlights, or other signals).³⁵² Although scarcely acknowledged in reviews, their value to theatres is reflected in the level of salaries, close to the range of prompters' rates, albeit without a benefit.³⁵³ Yet, though historians attest that "music was an equal and essential partner to the script,"³⁵⁴ they still puzzle over its concrete practices. Even after every production of *Nick* was accompanied by music, no shred of those melodies endured. Proctor submitted his request for copyright for a score to another play, *Saul*, but no one did for *Nick*.³⁵⁵ Two composers did allude to *Nick* in their titles. Anton Shide published a set of six didactic piano solos in 1859, naming the pieces after the story's major characters, as in the incongruent *Jibbenainosay Waltz* and *Wenonga Polka*.³⁵⁶ The absence of Telie in the set suggests that Shide responded (and expected pupils to respond) to Bird's novel rather than Medina's popular play. A generation later, the composer George Bristow wrote and performed once in 1886 the "grand orchestra" composition *Jibbenainosay*, which never came to print.³⁵⁷ Though Bristow's *Rip Van Winkle* had incorporated a libretto—it was hailed as the first American opera based on an American story³⁵⁸—neither score was meant to accompany theatre, and his *Jibbenainosay* had no accompanying lyric.

The *Nick* scripts, like the majority of plays, were not attached to music; they were

³⁵² Langhans, "Research Opportunities," named the whistle; Ryan, *Old Boston Museum*, named footlights.

³⁵³ At the risk of generalizing from one 1857 New York theatre, see *American Theatre Companies*, 517.

³⁵⁴ Deane L. Root, introduction to *Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theatre* (New York: Garland, 1994), vii.

³⁵⁵ *Compositions Copyrighted in the United States, 1870-1916* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), accessed May 3, 2008, Internet Archive, www.archive.org.

³⁵⁶ Anton Shide, *Selections from "Nick of the Woods"* (Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, 1859), Thomas A. Edison Collection of American Sheet Music, University of Michigan Library.

³⁵⁷ Bristow, "Overture to *Jibbenainosay*: for Grand Orchestra" MS. score, 1886, New York Public Library of Performing Arts. The manuscript bears features akin to workaday playscripts: marked copies, binding, and pasting.

³⁵⁸ Steven Ledbetter, introduction to George Bristow, *Rip Van Winkle: Grand Romantic Opera*, libretto reconstructed by J. W. Shannon, ed. Steven Ledbetter (New York: De Capo Press 1991), vii.

detached physically, at the level of booklet, and legally, in terms of copyright; most play printers were not equipped to handle music, as the next chapter demonstrates. To provide music, conductors culled an assortment of tunes, an estimated thirty to forty per show, from a pool of popular melodies.³⁵⁹ Besides tunes being used to enhance ambient moods, productions assigned short motifs to significant characters, played at their entrances (and in foreshadows or heightened moments related them), reflected in promptbook commands such as *#Telie Music#*. Historians and revival productions have speculatively reconstructed the *kinds* of music used, though without elaborating on the paper formats.³⁶⁰ The music historian Katherine Preston refers to “cue sheets,” meaning lists of musical numbers.³⁶¹ Did musical directors follow scripts, or just wait for prompter cues? The textual practices of melodrama music remain murky.

Licensing Playscripts

In England, a theatre’s manager arranged to have yet another copy made, this one to send outside the house to the state agency that granted permission to perform, specifically the Lord Chamberlain’s licenser. This copy highlights one of the few differences between British and US playscript practices, as the Licensor submission was the most direct interaction of the script with the state, though states bore on the course of their lives in indirect ways. In blunt terms, the state becomes more relevant at this juncture. In London, three versions of *Nick* were submitted to the central bureau in 1840, 1844, and 1858. Haines’s *Nick*, and Proctor’s tour with Medina’s version, found approval by other routes, or anyway are not preserved in the bureau files.

The procedure of pre-show textual censorship, given its long continuity—it started a century before and would last a century after the *Nick* era—its bureaucratic records, and ample

³⁵⁹ Deane L. Root, introduction to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, vol. 5 of *Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theatre* (New York: Garland, 1994), xiv. Root lists spiritual, hymns, and Tin Pan Alley songs as types culled for one play.

³⁶⁰ Hibberd and Nielson, “Music in Melodrama.” (See chap. 2, n. 144).

³⁶¹ Katherine Preston, “The Music of Toga Dramas,” in *Playing Out the Empire: “Ben-Hur” and Other Toga Plays and Films, 1883-1908*, ed. David Mayer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 27.

scholarship, is one of the better-known phases of the life of playscripts, at least in general.³⁶²

Theatre managers sent an extra copy of the play scheduled for production a few weeks later, adding a note not about the play's content, but its schedule of production. These mediating messages vary. Like many submissions, the 1858 equestrian *Nick* bears no separate letter (or none that survived), only a brief note written directly on the script. (See appendix I.) That note names the lessee and manager and theatre (Astley's); it addresses the Licensor, using the title rather than a name; and it states the expected date of production—altogether the bare-bones ingredients of the license request note genre. But others elaborated lengthier messages colored by more sociable rhetoric, as did the 1844 Pritchard submission in the form of a separate note, akin to an office memorandum (though placing the address below, not above the note). In the third-person, and without a comma, Pritchard politely asks the Licensor, by name, to expedite the process:

M^r Pritchard the Lessee of the York Theatrical Circuit will feel obliged if M^r Kemble will be so kind as to let him have the license for the accompanying Drama "Nick of the Woods" with as little delay as convenient as one of his Principal Performers for whom the Drama was written is anxious to take it for his Benefit on the 6th of November. Mr. Pritchard will as usual remit the fee immediately on receipt of the license.³⁶³

Rhetorically, the voice sounds confident that the play would be approved, as indeed most were; the writer seems concerned instead with timing (to meet an actor's benefit), as well as with assuring the office that the fee would be remitted—issues of practicality rather than dramatic content. The assertion that the drama was *written for* "one of his Principal Performers" is explicable in general—an instance of the "written for" trope discussed in the prior chapter—though not in particular, since both writer and actor remain unknown. The note does continue on

³⁶² Thomas, Carlton and Etienne, *Theatre Censorship*; Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright*, esp. 187-9.

³⁶³ Pritchard, to Lord Chamberlain's Office, October 22, 1844, Lord Chamberlain Plays, October-November 1844, Add. MS 42979 #7, British Library. (Letter case and punctuation in original.)

to a puzzling passage about a playwright's recent death, perhaps to remind Kemble of his shared social networks with Pritchard, or for some subtext elusive to us. Notably, the American actress-playwright, Charlotte Barnes, wrote more solicitously: "Miss C. Barnes of New York Presents her compliments to W. Kemble and encloses a play written by herself called *The Forest Princess, or two centuries ago* to be licensed for the Theatre Royal [...]"³⁶⁴ So despite the established protocol of the formal exchange, the genre of the submission note varied in rhetoric, length, and its basic form, as letter or jotted information.

In the next phase of the textual trajectory, the licensing official, often an underling, read the script with an eye for controversial passages (in relation to religion, state, or cultural propriety). On the occasion when the script needed revision, occasions that were infrequent, the reader marked those passages and returned the script to the theatre, where the prompter would redact it. But for *Nick of the Woods*, like other un-troubling plays, approval was sent presumably by a letter, while in the bureau, the officer signed and dated the decision. Scripts ended up marked by three or four dates and signatures, usually of a clerk (although Kemble himself signed Barnes' play). (See appendix I.) The script was then filed on site, an accumulation that evolved into an archive; the process of archiving the files has attracted more attention in recent theatre scholarship than any other instance of theatre preservation.³⁶⁵

These license-seeking playscripts themselves are not identical—the fact that these were submitted, or submissive, documents did not impose any uniform standard, as one might expect of rationalizing procedures. The *Nick* versions, like the majority of 1840s and 1850s submissions, were manuscripts, while some around them, especially foreign plays, were printed. The manuscripts varied materially in the ways iterated above, in size, paper, and pen style, including

³⁶⁴ Barnes, letter to Kemble, Lord Chamberlain Plays.

³⁶⁵ See the special issue of *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 36, no. 2 (December 2009), International Index to Performing Arts Full Text.

a writer using the *f*-like *s*. In the appendix samples, the 1840 shows a rounded hand and a swirl final flourish, the 1858, taller letters made in a thicker pen, and the 1844 script changed hands and style mid-way. Not even these official copies were consistently neat, so presumably they were not always produced by scribes. Though Kate Mattacks, comparing a Lord Chamberlain submission copy with printed and production booklets for one play, describes that bureaucratic copy as “skeletal,” stripped of “practical matter,”³⁶⁶ other submissions seem to have been recycled from earlier promptbooks, or anyway do bear prompt marks. Their formats vary.

These licensing copies also demonstrate alternatives in drama format, by which I mean the design of particular genre elements which signify by visual and spatial qualities, besides their linguistic code. A key example is the style of the character label (or “speech prefix”).³⁶⁷ In the 1840 script, the character name is positioned left, with the dialogue formatted by a hanging indent, as modeled in this final line of Nathan’s:

Nath. The Jibbenainosay is avenged!

Generally speaking, the left position seems to have been typical of cheap published plays anywhere and manuscript plays in England. In pragmatic terms, it wastes less space and hence saved paper, while it was ubiquitous in printed drama and so a familiar custom. The 1858 equestrian version used the alternative format, which centered the character label on its own line:

Nathan
Speak or thee dies!

This centered positioning of the character speech label, which consumes space, was shared by unlikely bedfellows: fine publishing everywhere and many handwritten rehearsal scripts in the US, where it is the rehearsal standard today. The 1844 Pritchard script, however, rather than

³⁶⁶ Kate Mattacks, “Thomas J. Williams’ *The Peep Show Man*,” 57.

³⁶⁷ Terminology for these elements is not systematized, though common options are “speech prefix,” “speech label,” and “nomenclature” (see chap. 2, n. 124). Alternatively and provisionally, I use is “character label.”

embody just one of the typical styles, represents the flux of such formats in general: when the new copyist took over mid-way, the layout shifts into an idiosyncratic design. The first four scenes, running over eighteen pages, follow the left-aligned style. The next scribe used another technique to demarcate name from speech, a margin line:

Forrest		Good heaven, how shall I act
Nathan		Truly I am perplexed and know not being a man of peace I cannot fight

(See appendix H.) Granted, the boundary was not firm, as the character label here and there spills across it. But overall the margin line more visibly identifies who speaks when, and thus serves rehearsing actors, if not licensors. The device, perhaps imported from legal documents, would become the house style of some London typing firms decades later—but in 1844, it was another quirky variation in the styles used by theatre’s own processes, an array that was not systematized even for interaction with the state.

Signatures

Across most script copies appeared the personal signature, which both contributed to workaday functions and exceeded them. The complexity of the signature, as act and sign, is too dense to articulate here, but I note a few features that resonate with the themes of this chapter.³⁶⁸ In relation to the larger society, the practice was imported from common textual culture; theatre workers were signing their names at home and in offices. At the level of semiotics, the signature conveyed “meaning” through visual qualities—recognizable shape and flourish—as much as through denoting legible text (often the signatures are difficult to decipher, yet easy to recognize). The written names bear multiple meanings. In terms of property, a signature on a playscript

³⁶⁸ For post-structural theorizing of signatures (beyond the strict sense used here), see Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca di Santo and Kevin Atell (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2009).

sometimes indicated that the signing person owned the document (distinct from the text), though ownership was usually expressed by the unmistakable phrase, *Property of* whomever. The manager's signature on a license submission represented responsibility for the text and production in the interaction with the state. Prompters also signed as a certification, or a kind of authorship, of their prompt-notes,³⁶⁹ confirming that they made the marks or used the book for a production—a gesture that serves multiple functions, pragmatic and symbolic. Some promptbooks bear multiple prompter signatures, usually following the same formula: prompter name, theatre name, and date. The written name on a playscript could also bespeak other values, such as the sentimental worth in a memento. Besides their quality of non-utility function, the signatures and dates belong to a separate temporality, neither the prior preparation for the show, nor its coordination in real-time, but the enduring aftermath.

To return to the episode invoked at the top of this study: the star actor Joseph Proctor, writing in unusual left-slanting strokes on a *Nick* script, autographed a promptbook, or a playbook soon to become a promptbook, on which he inscribed the dedicatory phrase, “As a token of esteem and admiration.”³⁷⁰ A species of the signature, the autograph is a kind of writing gift, which bestows a prestige or market “association value” to the book as it testifies to a particular social encounter.³⁷¹ Proctor's inscription addressed perhaps George C. Boniface (around 1871), or probably George Becks (around 1885), both of whom also signed and dated the script in separate spots, not as souvenir autographs, but as a workaday record or property claim. (Becks's name-date appears in appendix D). These signatures represented not merely the

³⁶⁹ On prompter signatures as confirmations, see John W. Brokaw, “A Mexican-American Acting Company, 1849-1924,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 27, no. 1 (March 1975): 23-29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3206337>.

³⁷⁰ Medina, *Nick of the Woods*, print and MS. promptbook (New York: Samuel French, n.d., ca. 1860-72), New York Public Library of Performing Arts.

³⁷¹ On association value of books, see David Pearson, *Provenance Research in Book History: A Handbook* (London: The British Library, 1994), 137.

person, but interactions and events, as anthropologist Matthew Hull explains about governmental workaday documents.³⁷² That promptbook became part of the bequest by Becks to the New York Public Library in 1905, where the library added its own form of signature to the document, in institutional markings.

In yet a more ineffable instance of signing, a woman (or so I infer) who played Telie in a production of *Nick of the Wood* signed her name repeatedly, intermittently, and variously, through the full print copy.³⁷³ Other script handlers repeated their signatures—often at the top of all acts, sometimes even running perpendicular across the playtext, and on covers—to what seems a redundant extent. But these marks usually repeat the *same* signature, whereas Foster (if she did the writing) signed variations of her name: Eliza F Foster, E.F. Foster, Eliza F. Foster, and Eliza Frances. The repetition reads as a testing, or tinkering, or something for a purpose beyond the purpose of theatre textual work: in a word, doodling. Indeed, on another page Foster or someone else sketched stacked circles, an abstract doodle irrelevant to the drama or production—an instance of non-communicative, non-functional marking, and an unusual use of a playscript. Eliza F. Foster’s pen work serves us as a reminder that the functions and motivations of mark-making are not always knowable, even when they seem as customary as a signature.

Conclusion

Theatre workers made multiple kinds of marks on workaday playscripts, in varied styles, for diverse functions or quasi-functions, corresponding to different values and timelines. Their materials were drawn from common material culture, indeed from international flows of goods, while their textual practices shared techniques with textual work elsewhere in society. Both materials and practices were refracted for the means of production of theatre, which circulated

³⁷² Matthew S. Hull, “The File: Agency, Authority, and Autography in an Islamabad Bureaucracy,” *Language and Communication* 23 (2003): 286-314, doi:10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00019-3.

³⁷³ Medina, *Nick* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, n.d.), Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University.

internationally in the textual culture common to English-language theatre. Those practices perpetuated old customs to a remarkable degree, yet they were also undergoing change in particular details, such as the repertoire of symbols on promptbook, the format of actors' copies, and such technological changes as metal pens and colored ink. The printed play, especially from the newly emerging specialized publisher of cheap editions, contributed to changes in theatre's workaday texts—and is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Four:

The Industrial Script: Five Nineteenth-Century Play Publishers

The era of *Nick's* commercial stage career, roughly 1838 to the 1880s, corresponds to a particular material-cultural moment of publishing, a fusion of several strands of transformation: technology, such as stereotype and mechanization of papermaking, besides advances in transport and communications (post and cable); intellectual property standards, which, despite efforts to tighten them, remained relatively loose; and the recent proliferation of print formats, especially series and periodicals. Undergirding these happenings were movements of money and credit, as well as information, crucial phenomena which this chapter merely begins to broach. Play publishing reflected the popularity of theatre across social classes as well as the ascent of amateur theatre, which commercial publishing helped to foment. Plays had been and still were issued in sundry print forms: author-driven, small-batch printing, without distributing the scripts in the market (a tactic, marked as “printed not published,” sought in order to preserve copyright);³⁷⁴ quality collections in expensive, bound volumes; excerpts of drama for elocution exercises reprinted in school readers such as McGuffey’s in the US; and of course the diverse forms of repackaging of Shakespeare, virtually a sub-genre to itself.³⁷⁵ *Nick of the Woods* came to print alongside Shakespeare plays mainly in one particular format, the one that especially characterizes the era: Acting Editions, manufactured with cheap paper; relatively inexpensive to

³⁷⁴ Meredith McGill, “Copyright,” *The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship, vol. 3 of *A History of the Book in America*, ed. David D. Hall (Chapel Hill: American Antiquarian Society and University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 158-178. McGill’s essay refers to drama publishing, noting that this printing-without-publishing tactic protected the playwright’s copyright.

³⁷⁵ Marvin Spevack, “What Price Shakespeare?: James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips and the Shilling Shakespeare of the 1860s,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 96, no. 1 (March 2002): 23-47. Spevack describes the Shakespeare tercentenary cascade of “corrected, revised, stereotyped, rubricated editions on plain paper, thick paper, India paper, and vellum, embellished with biographies, memoirs, facsimiles, portraits, engravings, illustrations, ornaments, annotations, quotations, glossaries,” 37, including Dicks’ imprints discussed below.

buy, scaled to a manual, portable size; purportedly derived from the backstage copies of performed plays; and increasingly frank in commercialism. Acting editions, the format used by four out of five *Nick* publishers, interlaced the worlds of print and theatre, whether commercial or amateur, and in retrospect, they embody the interconnectedness of social phenomena with materiality, or culture and economics, in its several senses, from paper to printing press to postal rates and profit. The last example of a published *Nick*, by Dicks in London, merged a few acting edition features with qualities of periodical publishing. Some of these print-theatre connections are manifest on the playscripts themselves, especially in the “zones” recently coined *paratexts* by Gérard Genette, whose analysis guides much of my attention to marginal details;³⁷⁶ other features are inferable, to varying degrees, from archival specimens, secondary sources, and scholarship. A scrutiny of *Nick of the Woods* playscripts, couched in the stories of the five publishers producing both Haines’s and Medina’s versions, begins to reveal this complex, multidimensional unfolding, as it was transforming during the industrial era.

Studying Play Publishing

When, as a thing, the playscript leaves the theatre for the realm of book production, as an object of study, it leaves Theatre Studies, especially for the nineteenth-century period. W. B. Worthen, in one of the field’s rare forays into book production, *begins* with G. B. Shaw at the advent of Modernism (and, generally, he travels more conceptual and poetical pathways, relative to the brass-tacks materialism of my study).³⁷⁷ The most thorough attention to play publishing has fallen on earlier periods, especially the English Renaissance or early modern era, and these have emerged mainly from English and the sub-field Renaissance studies, rather than Theatre History. Julie Stone Peters articulates the early symbiotic development of play printing, as the

³⁷⁶ Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*.

³⁷⁷ W. B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

very concept of playscript format was solidifying, and turns to other epi-theatre genres for later eras, including actor biographies.³⁷⁸ In a book-history-oriented anthology about early modern drama, Peter Blayney's essay reconstructs a schematic survey of publishing, a thick description that has no counterpart for the very distinct conditions of machine-age play publishing.³⁷⁹

Book-related scholarship, meanwhile, has considered *this genre* but in other periods, or *this period* but for other genres. Book History, by which I mean a federation of researches concerned with the making, marketing, and using of material texts, gives rise to myriad insights about parallel genres, encompassing commercial, non-canon works (the class into which *Nick* falls), such as story-papers, magazines, broadsides, music, Bibles, and three-volume novels (though not as yet Bird's *Nick*). These insights inform my analysis, especially by encouraging attention to the comprehensive "book circuit": the main materials, manufacture, distribution, and patrons' acquiring and using printed products.³⁸⁰ More is known about these nodes for novels and newspapers than for plays. And, as I explained in the introduction, and as chapter three makes clear, the book circuit needs rerouting for the case of published plays to incorporate the processes of practical theatre, with its different modes of handling and reading, and its distinct economies. Bibliography, too, a field that is autonomous yet interlaced with other book (and literary) studies, has contributed methods of scrutiny and reconstruction of practices, though again, it has done so more extensively in earlier periods: W. W. Gregg, Pollard and others

³⁷⁸ Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe*.

³⁷⁹ Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 383-422.

³⁸⁰ For a sampling of analytic cases (of other genres), see *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America*, ed. Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); for general essays on major topics (besides drama), see Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*.

grounded the very ethos of the field on the subject of early modern plays.³⁸¹ As of this writing, I know of no analogous consideration of industrial-era plays, which are mentioned only scarcely in landmark studies and reference texts, and nor is there a continuous growing corpus of scholarship on playscripts as material texts, but rather sporadic efforts. A 1930s bibliographer, R. Crompton Rhodes, unusual for discussing low-quality drama among Renaissance aficionados, surveyed the era's English play publishers, especially in terms of format and style, represented by the archive of one defunct theatre; sixty years later, John Stephens' reconstruction of British publishers accords with the concerns of his monograph—playwrights producing quality drama—rather than describe play publishing as its own domain.³⁸²

This chapter expands from the groundwork surveys of Rhodes and Stephens using the cases of Medina and Haines's *Nick of the Woods*. This case-based reconstruction rounds out the portraits of publishers, products, and markets along several dimensions. In geography, Haines was published by houses almost limited to the UK, and Medina by one confined to the US, but Medina was also published by the company that straddled both regions, Samuel French. This trans-Atlantic scope more aptly represents the map of English-language publishing than does a national framework, as Meredith McGill argues in her reconstruction of the era's prevalent practice of reprinting.³⁸³ At the level of agents, this chapter considers the publishers as individual persons with full, specific careers. Although individual-centered accounts of publishing are problematic for obscuring the matrix of factors that mobilized a company, in that era, the single heads *were* the principal agent. Firms like these were typically small: Samuel French's assistant

³⁸¹ For a history of the field of bibliography, see William Proctor Williams and Craig S. Abbot, introduction to *An Introduction to Bibliographic and Textual Studies*, 4th ed. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009), 1-11.

³⁸² R. Crompton Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," *Library*, ser. 4, 16 (1936): 91-112 and 210-231; Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright: British Theatre, 1800-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 5.

³⁸³ McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

and successor, Wentworth Hogg, recalled that when he joined the London branch in the 1870s, “Mr. French and myself were the staff.”³⁸⁴ Often these offices involved father-son lineages, as seen in three of the five cases, while Spencer’s involved brothers.³⁸⁵ Leadership fused *owning* with *managing*, which were sundered only in a later phase of capitalism, when companies elaborated into multi-department corporations, delimiting the purview of the entrepreneur.³⁸⁶ Attention to individuals also illustrates the diversity of play publishers’ personal backgrounds and projects, as chapter two did for playwrights, which should forestall any simplistic inference about the motivation for, or ideology inherent in, producing *Nick* in particular. *Nick*, in publishing, became one unit in a series; its specific story seems hardly to have mattered, except indirectly, in response to the play’s stage success, or slightly, to assign it to an inventory grouping according to sub-genre. The economic dimension of the script’s trajectory, while active in every phase of the script’s life, is especially foregrounded in publishing, which is linked to the materiality of machine and the finances of large-scale capitalist processes in ways more obvious than in the case of theatres or dramatists. If, as bibliographer Nicholas Barker asserts, money and capital are the *sine qua non* in the life of books,³⁸⁷ this kind of materiality warrants more attention in the case of industrial-era playscripts. Yet that economic and material dimension is animated only in interaction with cultural and social processes—not in the specific meanings of *Nick* as a drama, but in other meanings associated with print culture, which this chapter begins to suggest.

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Samuel French [company], *Truly Yours: French's, the House for Plays, 1830-1980* (New York: Samuel French, 1980), 8, Rare Books and Special Collections, Amherst College Library. The quotation lacks a citation.

³⁸⁵ On the shift to family firm (in Britain), see David Finkelstein, “The Globalization of the Book 1800-1970,” in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 315-328, esp. 331.

³⁸⁶ On typical book firm structure, see Alexis Weedon, in Eliot and Rose, *History of the Book*, chap. 12; on the own/control distinction, see Frank Stillwell, “Corporation,” in *Encyclopedia of Political Economy*, ed. Phillip Anthony O’Hara (New York: Routledge, 1999), I: 154-7.

³⁸⁷ Barker, *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society* (London: The British Library, 1993), 3.

John Duncombe and Company

John Duncombe and Company had been printing plays for over a decade by the time *Nick of the Woods* was staged; in fact the company had already printed several titles by Haines, some from productions at the same theatre, the Victoria (later “Old Vic”). In the 1820s, John Duncombe joined the printing and publishing operation of his father, Edward Duncombe, a “press man” from “grub street,” in the description by a recent literary historian.³⁸⁸ Duncombe and Company ran in directions different from contemporary play publishers when it trafficked in pornography and radical politics, materials that garnered the company a reputation as underworld or anti-establishment, while John acquired the persona of libertine rake. Situated at the margin of the mainstream of the respectable book trade³⁸⁹—Duncombe’s provided a vehicle for risqué material, sometimes underdog themes, and populist literature, while the company methods partook of textual “piracy;” that is, their practices did not adhere to purported gentlemen’s agreements or “courtesy of the trade.” In the 1810s, publishing a politically critical journal brought the publishers to court, after which the Duncombes pivoted toward pro-government material, salacious scandal reports, alongside “pornography” of a literary strain.³⁹⁰ For these colorful services, Duncombe has attracted more cultural-studies scholars than have his counterparts, these analyses oriented toward the political ideology of his products. In literary history, David Worall suggests that this type of company published *uncontroversial* materials—Haines’s *Nick* would fall into this group—in order to fund its politically provocative projects, while issuing some Gothic drama, notably *Tom and Jerry*, for their sensibility of “social

³⁸⁸ David Worall, “The Political Culture of Gothic Drama,” in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, MA: Blackwell Press, 2000), 100. 94-106,

³⁸⁹ Duncombe’s addresses: 19 Little Queen Street, Holborn; 10 Middle Row, Holborne; and 17 Holborn Hill.

³⁹⁰ Worall, “Gothic Drama.”

alterity.”³⁹¹ From the framework of radical political history, Iain McCalman finds this “alterity” diluted, since Duncombe’s obscene material lacked cynical critique and drew handsome profits.³⁹²

Besides these salacious publications, Duncombe sold other genres. Unlike most play publishers, he dealt in music, including several pieces identified as “nigger melody.”³⁹³ Reproducing music required a dedicated set of typeface along with the skill to compose and edit scores. Hence, for these specialized expenses, music was often published by separate, dedicated specialty houses, such as Philadelphia’s Lee and Walker, which issued Anton Shide’s *Nick of the Woods* piano exercises (see chapter three, page 45).³⁹⁴ In yet another genre and technology, Duncombe’s company published portraits, using distinct surfaces (copper, wood, or steel), carving tools, ink, paper, and press, besides the additional craft of hand-coloring, a capacity enabling the firm to “embellish” plays and books with pictures.

Duncombe issued prose chapbooks and fiction, particularly the “part books,” or narratives delivered in a series of sections, which, like chapbooks and pamphlets, seem related to play publishing at the level of production and selling. Inverting the normal sequence, publishers first targeted part stories to lower-class patrons, after which the format was adapted for higher classes (thereby gaining respectability).³⁹⁵ Other publishers would repackage Robert M. Bird’s *Nick of the Woods* in serial parts in mid-century, even as it was also reprinted in regular book

³⁹¹ Worall, “Gothic Drama.” The dramatization in question is William Thomas Moncrieff, *Tom and Jerry; or, Life in London*: (London: John Duncombe & Company, 1821).

³⁹² Iain McCalman, “Unrespectable Radicalism: Infidels and Pornography in Early Nineteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present*, 104 (August 1984): 74-110, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650699>.

³⁹³ For example, “Jim Crow, Goin Ober de Mountain,” besides the enduring “Oh Susannah.” Worldcat.

³⁹⁴ Scott E. Casper, “Other Variations on the Trade,” in Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book*, 203-223. Casper covers music publishing with textbooks, as alternative publishing systems, noting that literature publishing constituted the smaller portion of all textual reproduction.

³⁹⁵ On this format’s social elevation, see Simon Eliot, “From Few and Expensive to Many and Cheap: the British Book Market, 1800-1890,” in Eliot and Rose, *History of the Book*, 291-302.

format;³⁹⁶ the cheaper format, far from redundant, reached the tier of patrons who could not afford multiple-volume, cloth-bound novels. This parts strategy was used for the peculiar genre of *fictionalized drama*, the inverse of dramatized novels: prose stories rendered from plays, which were almost always drawn from recent, local productions. *Duncombe's Tales*, issued weekly in segments, and *tiny* (about 4.25 by 3 inches), came “embellished” with a frontispiece, a hand-colored, fold-out illustration. Some of the tales came full circle—they fictionalized drama that had been dramatized from fiction. Thus Duncombe’s *The Last Days of Pompeii* tale was based on some unspecified play version; as a cheap, serial tale, its prose was simplified for readers who might not have tackled Bulwer-Lytton’s three-volume novel.³⁹⁷ Duncombe issued at least three of Haines’s plays as such *Dramatic Tales*—using works that the company did not publish as drama.³⁹⁸ These part stories are relevant not only as examples of this firm’s catholic publishing, but more generally, as having (I suspect) laid the path for cheap playbooks, by providing a model and technological means for producers, and for fostering a respectful recognition of the very format among consumers of mixed classes, even if plays themselves were never issued in the separate part format.

After having worked in visual, musical, periodic, radical, literary, Gothic, and pornographic modes, in the late 1820s John Duncombe launched several series of drama, which, in a sense, fuse most of earlier forms (if not the erotica)—they include pictures, refer to theatrical music, and take the format of serial chapbook pamphlets. *Duncombe's Acting Edition of the*

³⁹⁶ *Nick* in parts appeared, *inter alia*, in the UK *Boy's Miscellany* (“monthly parts only four-pence”), advertised in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London), May 17, 1863, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale Cengage; and in the US *Fireside Companion* (New York: G. Munro and Company, 1868), advertised in *Harpers*, April 4, 1868, Nineteenth Century Masterfile, Paratext.

³⁹⁷ *The Last Days of Pompeii* (London: Duncombe, n.d.), New York Public Library.

³⁹⁸ Duncombe novelized three of Haines’s plays: *My Poll*, *Ocean of Life*, and *Richard Plantagenet*, the latter held in the New York Public Library. Part no. 3 of *Richard* bears preliminary “remarks” that praise the playwright (Haines), the minor (non-duopoly) theatre in general, the Victoria Theatre in particular, and its staff, including the stage manager.

British Theatre purported to offer “the best pieces as performed in the London Theatres.” That plural group, London Theatres, is significant, implying a unified set of playhouses in one city, distinct from earlier English publishers issuing only *patent* theatre productions (such as Regency-era John Murray’s cooperation with the Drury theatre).³⁹⁹ Duncombe’s era saw the scope widened to minor theatres. John Duncombe was striking, as Rhodes and Stephens note, for publishing *recent* unprinted plays, and issuing them in numbered series.⁴⁰⁰ Haines’s *Nick of the Woods* came as number 352 in the British Theatre series, one of the nine by him that Duncombe ultimately published.⁴⁰¹ Issued soon after the London production in 1839—though precisely when is hard to determine—this was the first time any *Nick* crossed from backstage manuscript to marketed print publication. Duncombe’s title page did not claim it as the first publication, as Spencer’s would for Medina’s, but rather, as if competing with rival imprints, as “The only edition correctly marked, by permission, from the prompter’s book.” That boast, one of several varieties of publisher aggrandizement, underscores the perceived value of the *workaday* playscript as the authentic source for play publishing, and it also implies a direct exchange—a social relationship—between publisher and theatre.

Although play publishers operated from within the book world, rather than from within theatre itself, their networks usually extended to theatre: to obtain manuscripts to print (especially of new work), to peddle playscripts in theatres (though this practice had receded),⁴⁰² and to participate in the political/intellectual/literary social circles that itself interacted with playwrights and actors. One literary society gathered in a building next door to Duncombe’s

³⁹⁹ Massimiliano Demata, “Between the Stage and the Book: John Murray and the Publication of Drama, 1812-19,” *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 96, no. 2 (June 2002): 257-78. Murray printed scripts from the Drury theatre, where he also sold playbooks.

⁴⁰⁰ Rhodes, “The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama,” 215, in the Duncombe section, 212-218.

⁴⁰¹ Of Haines’s plays, Duncombe issued *Breakers Ahead; Charming Polly; The Idiot Witness; Jacob Faithful; Maidens Beware!; Nick of the Woods; Ratlin, the Reefer; the Wizard Skiff; and The Wraith of the Lake*.

⁴⁰² Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*, 121. Stephens mentions a later return to such in-theatre selling.

press.⁴⁰³ Although Duncombe was reputed to have pirated texts (notably Byron's *Don Juan*),⁴⁰⁴ and perhaps he issued *Dramatic Tales* without compensating writers, he may have obtained playbooks by legitimate exchanges with prompters or even playwrights. (Publishers often worked by both legitimate and illicit routes.)⁴⁰⁵ Not long before *Nick* came to stage, the playbook of Haines's *Maidens Beware!* (1837) incorporated a brief "remark" signed by the playwright—a rare insertion, since Duncombe did not usually preface plays with "remarks" or dedications, as did Cumberland in London and William Taylor in New York. (In the note, Haines denied accusations that *Maidens* was an adaptation from a French text, an instance of deference to the social sanction, distinct from any legal sanction, against plagiarism.)⁴⁰⁶ The Parliament Act of 1833, dubbed the Bulwer Act after the writer who lobbied for it, inscribed new conditions by which a playwright assumed more intellectual property rights over his or her play (which had belonged to the producing theatre) and now might enjoy those rights even after publication (instead of work entering the public domain)—or so it promised in principle. The real effect of legal change is, however, difficult to gauge, and it had no manifestation on *Nick of the Woods*, which bore no copyright notice.⁴⁰⁷

Duncombe and John Haines's *Nick of the Woods*

In its pamphlet format, Duncombe's *Nick of the Woods* conformed to the house style; publishers, not writers, usually determined the appearance of printed matter. In book format, it is pocket-size small (over five by three inches, larger than the miniscule *Dramatic Tales*, but

⁴⁰³ McCalman, "Unrespectable Radicalism," 105. The literary society met next door to the press on Middle Row.

⁴⁰⁴ McCalman, "Unrespectable Radicalism," 100; most accounts of the company refer to its pirating.

⁴⁰⁵ McGill, "Copyright," in *The Industrial Book*, 159.

⁴⁰⁶ Haines, remark in *Maidens Beware!* (London: Duncombe, 1837), n.p., New York Public Library. The legitimate/legal distinction in an earlier era is parsed in Laura Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), chap. 3.

⁴⁰⁷ Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*, 138. Stephens argues that theatres withheld playscripts from publication (hoarding copyright).

smaller than Samuel French's format).⁴⁰⁸ These publications perpetuated the preference for palm-sized pamphlets. Scaling down saved paper, which was reliant on the vulnerable market in rags, still the main source of paper pulp;⁴⁰⁹ indeed, Duncombe economized by covering some copies of *Dramatic Tales* in paper recycled from utterly different publications.⁴¹⁰ The size also made the play portable.

Duncombe's book-production identity, the combination of printing and publishing (which was not typical of generalist publishers) and the capability of reproducing graphics, is evident on the playbook. The company used a template cover, or "wrapper," a carefully-designed layout in which the most visible piece is the publisher brand in its short-title form, *Duncombe's British Series*, beneath which lies a blank space where a worker would stamp or write the play title and number; on the British Library copy of *Nick of the Woods*, the title on is stamped off-kilter, a hint of its secondary status, where the cover serves as a showcase for the publisher rather than the play. The design also showcases state-of-the-art typography: a phrase etched, not composed, to curve along an arc (when most playscript typography was constrained to the grid); and the series name set in the outline typeface (*British Theatre*), an "elegant" and "humanistic" style only recently imported from engraving, according to a typography historian.⁴¹¹ This would have seemed au courant. Surrounding the text is a full-page picture, a "device" or branding image for the entire series. Many publishers used small, isolated devices, often a cluster of Attic masks or thespian paraphernalia, while others framed the front page with a border (as did Lacy), but Duncombe fused both frame and iconography: the cover depicts a proscenium stage, curtain

⁴⁰⁸ I describe imprints by ordinary measures rather than bibliographic gauges, e.g., 12°, foliation, or signatures.

⁴⁰⁹ Marjorie Plant, *English Book Trade: an Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1935), 334-5. Plant's political economy analysis is not outdated, at least in the observation that the rise of newspapers in Duncombe's era especially skewed the paper market.

⁴¹⁰ That is: on Duncombe's *Last Days of Pompeii*, the ostensibly blank, inside back-cover bears a fraction of some unrelated text, set in much larger type, revealing enough letters for us to recognize the word "Scandal."

⁴¹¹ Nicolette Gray, "Slab-Serif Design in England, 1815-1845," *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 15 (1980/81): 35. 1-35,

drawn, flanked on each side by a statuesque woman figure in a narrow-waist Victorian gown; at the virtual front of the stage, the publisher information sits between scrolls. Cumberland used a similar architectural frame.⁴¹² The assemblage is not an artist's pastiche, but a somewhat literal representation of a stage as it was decorated at the time, with classical-muse figures and bas-relief of literary and cultural iconography, such as scrolls and laurels. Duncombe's cover bespeaks the print-world efforts to straddle associations of both theatre and book-making, or more precisely, to *invoke* theatre imagery while *displaying* printing prowess. Indeed, the imprints remind readers multiple times that Duncombe both published and printed them, including the conventional "printed by" colophon following the end of the playtext (the customary position in British publications).

In many features, *Nick* took the form of the *Acting Edition*, a mode that Duncombe adopted from a long-developing form, started perhaps in the eighteenth century and elaborated by Oxberry in the 1810s (or by other houses—the lineage is not reliably reconstructed).⁴¹³ This format departed from the literary presentation of Mrs. Inchbald's series and other play publications by adding—and boasting about adding—certain details that indicated the actors' movements, costume, running time, and details related to staging, theatrical features that Oxberry summarized as "luminous information."⁴¹⁴ Duncombe's title pages promised these components

⁴¹² Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 107. This reprint of Cumberland's device shows columns looped with ribbons inscribed with great-author names, between which radiates a globe bearing the name "Shakespeare." Rhodes inferred that Duncombe's sculpted figures, Melpomene and Thalia, were modeled on statues in the Drury Lane Theatre.

⁴¹³ When did the *Acting Edition* begin? For Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 103, with Oxberry; for Stephens *Profession of the Playwright*, 116, with Dolby; a third source to publishing only Theatre Royal productions: Marilouise Michel, "Samuel French, Ltd.," in *British Literary Publishers, 1820-1880*, ed. Patricia Anderson and Jonathan Rose, vol. 106 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Peter Dzwonkoski (Detroit: Gale, 1991), 139; while earlier instances are noted by Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *The Publication of Plays in Eighteenth-Century England: Playwrights, Publishers, and The Market* (London: The British Library, forthcoming).

⁴¹⁴ On Mrs. Inchbald's series, see Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*, 124, and Marvin Carlson, "Elizabeth Inchbald: A Woman Critic in Her Theatrical Culture," in *Women in British Romantic Theatre: Drama, Performance & Society 1790-1840*, ed. Catherine Burroughs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 207-222; Oxberry's euphemism quoted in Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 104.

in what had become the standard phrasing:

To which is added, a description of the costume—cast of the characters
The whole of the stage business
Situations—entrances—exits—properties, and directions.

(See appendix J.) Though entrances and exits had long been integral to playtexts, the additions did demarcate this kind of edition from others, particularly from those intended for reading. Yet they did not alter the conceptual boundaries of dramatic literature, since costumes and directions were still defined as external matter to be “added” to the playtext-proper—paratexts were an alluring commodity, not a literary theory. (The additions probably did influence the standards of later literary dramatic publishing, however, in relation to what belongs in or with a playtext.) The purported value of the Acting Edition was not only that the play was *potentially* stage-able, but that it had been *actually* staged, as emphasized in the series sub-title, “The best pieces *as performed in the London Theatre*,” and other publishers’ variations of the phrase. While, as Adrian John argues, publishers had long exerted themselves to cultivate “credit,” or patrons’ trust in their print products as texts,⁴¹⁵ with acting editions publishers extended this credibility to an utterly separate medium, theatre on stage. Duncombe usually filled preliminary pages with these promised additions, the *Dramatis Personae* (listing both characters and the actors of the premiere), the running-time of the play (labeled “time in representation”), and a costume list: “Ralph Stackpole: goat skin Robinson Crusoe dress, with Indian leggings, large round skin hat[,] large knife and hatchet.” (Appendix K shows these as Lacy reprinted them.) The costume inventory, given its ubiquity and elaborate detail, seems to have been considered not only practical information (for amateurs, especially), but pleasurable reading by itself (and for scholars, an index of material culture and consumption—where did a Londoner procure goat

⁴¹⁵ Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), chap. 1. 1-56.

skin?). These elements fuse several kinds of knowledge and information: a historical record of what purportedly happened for a production; practical guidance for staging; and an ethnographic or historical catalogue of exotic material culture (weapons, and wigwams).

These theatrical additions were the hallmarks of an Acting Edition, yet in Duncombe's generation, publishers also enhanced playbooks with features drawn from the book world, invoking its aristocratic stratum. After the company promotion on the cover, the title page offered more specific identification of the single play, reproducing Haines's full title, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Altar of Revenge*, in contrast to the streamlining policy of later publishers, who dropped any secondary title. (See appendix J.) Another familiar bookish enhancement was the title-page by-line, where John Haines carries the suffix *esq* (esquire) along with that standard bibliographic blurb, "Author of . . .," followed by seven titles (not his oeuvre, but his titles also published by Duncombe).⁴¹⁶ Though common for books, the credit is noteworthy in an era when dramatists were not automatically credited on theatre ephemera, and source novelists were not always named on dramatized plays; indeed, R. M. Bird's name is absent from all *Nick* editions.⁴¹⁷ Elevating the dramatist displayed respect to living writers, the sources of future playscripts, and it also, by association, elevated the image of the publisher; as a cultural reflex, meanwhile, it perpetuated familiar custom, bringing one publisher's product into the arena of respectable print. The rival houses Cumberland and Davidson, who published four other plays by Haines, inserted prefaces (or "remarks" or letters),⁴¹⁸ a literary element that linked drama closer to other genres, but that was disappearing from the newer style of cheap plays issued by

⁴¹⁶ For analysis of this "Author of" paratext, see Genette, *Paratexts*, 45.

⁴¹⁷ The lack of author by-lines on playbills becomes obvious from a simple glance at samples, or see Frank Rahill, introduction to *The World of Melodrama* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), vi.

⁴¹⁸ Across forty years, George Daniel (who signed as D—G) wrote regular "remarks" and drew pictures for Cumberland and Davison, including some Haines plays. In one cynical preface, D—G found the play "instrumental in filling many bright eyes with tears and the manager's purse with money." Daniel, preface to Haines, *My Poll* (London: Duncombe, n.d.), preliminary pages, New York Public Library.

Duncombe and later houses.

The more striking book-world feature is not text, but rather the printed picture facing the title page, an addition more characteristic of this generation than the next, and of British more than US imprints. (See appendix J.) Duncombe's Acting Edition plays came "embellished with a scenic illustration," as covers promised generically, an enticement further specified on the title page as "a fine engraving by Mr. Findray [sic], from a Drawing taken expressly in the Theatre." Though not always crediting draughtsman or engraver by name (or correct spelling), illustrated playbooks always distinguished *drawing* from *engraving*, an acknowledgement of these distinct artisan crafts that were part of the large print sphere, a social as well as a trade arena. Printer-publishers drew from a small pool of craftsmen, the engravers Findlay, Jones, or the prominent artist, Robert Cruikshank, who (allegedly) drew scenes from other Haines plays for rival companies.⁴¹⁹ It may have been easier to pirate or plagiarize text than images, given this social network of technical interdependence in printing districts.

Duncombe's pictures were understood to depict a scene staged in a recent production, distinct from another type of illustration, as on Dicks' covers later, that suggests an episode imagined by the artist. Thus Haines's plays were well recorded under the media standards of the time, relative to Medina's. This *Nick* engraving depicts the penultimate scene (act 2, scene 5) when Nathan/Nick rescues Edith from Braxley's clutches inside the Chief's wigwam (although its wigwam-ness is not evident). Printed in rough lines, the depiction scarcely individuates one particular actor, as portraits were meant to do. Still, it does represent an emotional peak in Haines's version, while encompassing *both* main story-lines (Nathan's vengeance and the Forrester couple's plight) and conveying a staple of melodrama (the hero rescuing a virgin from

⁴¹⁹ According to publisher paratexts, Cruikshank purportedly drew stage scenes for Haines, *The Ocean of Life* (London: Cumberland, n.d.; London: Davison n.d.), and *Austerlitz* (London: Cumberland, n.d.).

sexual threat), though it does so at the expense of the play's more striking features: the active heroine Telie and the savagery of Indians (who are absent from their wigwam). The coloring, too, matters. Braxley predictably wears dark raiment, Nathan is half dark, and Edith's gown is left blank, thematically exuding the white of her virtuousness, while practically leaving space for coloring by hand (though no one had painted this particular copy).⁴²⁰ To further define the ontology, or sub-genre, of the picture: despite purportedly depicting a theatrical episode, it represents the fictitious *play-world* (like the pictures in Duncombe's *Dramatic Tales*), distinct from a *stage scene*, which would show curtains or stage-boards, as did the tinsel portrait of Haines described in the last chapter. (The latter type, though normalized later, was unusual in the representation of drama then, for reasons perhaps related to book publishing conventions as much as to concepts of drama.)⁴²¹ Materially, Duncombe's graphic medium might have been wood-cut, a technique with long precedent and long endurance; or a copperplate etching, though that involved a more costly, elaborate, and short-lived plate (albeit with finer lines); or wood "engraving," a recent advent using a different axis of the wood, cheaper than metal in production while finer than woodcut in effect. (The boon of the stone-painting method, lithography, had yet to pervade image reproduction.)⁴²² Duncombe manufactured the picture separately from the text, joining the two only in binding; one of the disadvantages of Western printing's movable relief type was its technical incompatibility with intaglio, or recessed, image production (in contrast to the even planes of Chinese wood-blocks for both image and text), until later developments

⁴²⁰ Haines, *Nick of the Woods* (London: Duncombe, n.d., ca. 1838), British Library.

⁴²¹ A rare illustration of the actual stage appears on the cover of Tom Taylor and Mark Lemon, *Slave Life; or Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London: Webster and Company, n.d.), New York Public Library of the Performing Arts; toy or miniature play-covers did depict the performing event, showing small stages in domestic parlors, for example.

⁴²² For a succinct survey of graphic media in the UK, see Rob Banham, "The Industrialization of the Book, 1800-1970," in *History of the Book*, Eliot and Rose, 273-290; for a more extensive account of the US, see Clarence Pearson Hornung and Fridolf Johnson, *Two Hundred Years of American Graphic Art* (New York: George Braziller 1976), 35-70.

integrated the two.⁴²³ Duncombe's *Nick* picture seems separate or separable from the booklet, not only because of its sturdier paper, but because of the legend set beneath the picture, which presents the play title (in black letter typeface), the dialogue passage, and the citation:

Nick of the Woods
BRAXLEY: Heaven hath given you to my power....
NATHAN: (*Springing on him*) Thou liest !

Act 2 Scene 5

The excerpt presents the picture as a quintessential melodrama moment, centering on the white men antagonists, rather occluding Edith and the specificities of *Nick of the Woods*. At the bottom of the page, Duncombe reprinted his company information, which seems redundant when facing its mirror image at the base of the title page, but the redundancy has its rationale: the picture could have been sold separately or, as happened with pictures, cut out by consumers for display—in which event it would still advertise the printer-publisher.

Duncombe's plays were an example of the "cheap and plentiful text" aimed at humble buyers, for the common price of six pence, when a mere *part* of Bird's novel cost eight pence.⁴²⁴ Duncombe listed a few plays in proto-catalogue advertisements on some blank end-pages—the marketing genre that intensified in subsequent decades. The possibility of buying a copy in person at 10 Middle Row, Holborn, or else ordering one by mail, was perhaps implied by the company address, but the channel the paratexts made explicit was the array of booksellers, or agents, listed below the publisher address, which crossed countries: around England (one in London, others in Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool); the United Kingdom (Dublin and Edinburgh); and in the US (the play publishers Turner and Fisher of New York and Philadelphia). The latter US agents, who published another Haines but no Medina title, shared a similar format

⁴²³ On ca. 1600 Chinese plays, see Li-ling Hsiao, "Performance, Illustration, and Reading in the Drama Culture of the Wanli Period," PhD Dissertation, St. Anne's College, University of Oxford, 2001.

⁴²⁴ Advertisement for "Novel Newspaper Editions," *Glasgow Herald*, November 24, 1851, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale Cengage.

and style with Duncombe, if not his corporate stability.⁴²⁵ Even this pan-region and cross-Atlantic range, though, is modest, and Duncombe's format still bears the vestiges of literary aspirations, in comparison to the next phase of play publishers.

Thomas H. Lacy

In 1853, after Duncombe died, his publishing concern was sold at auction, a sale that represented the diverse scope of his business, containing:

miscellaneous books, stereotype plates, quire stock, engravings, engraved copper plates, 2500 engraved music plates, valuable copyrights of published and unpublished works, the extensive stock of music in all classes, also useful printing materials.⁴²⁶

The transaction involved both concrete objects and abstract property in rights, both of which were commonly sold through the conduit of auctions, another event pertinent to the trajectories of playscripts. Of these lots, the stereotype plates and copyrights, and perhaps some miscellaneous books and quires of paper, were presumably bought by Thomas H. Lacy.⁴²⁷ The only publisher in this survey to begin in theatre (having quit an early-adult career in acting, playwriting, and managing), Lacy began book work either peddling used plays or publishing.⁴²⁸ He bought other publishers' stock—of which Duncombe's was the apparent first, bringing Haines's *Nick of the Woods* to a second imprint before Medina's version was ever published.⁴²⁹ Lacy's stage background, unusual in the book business, perhaps explains his concentration on theatre materials: fashioned into a "Theatrical Bookseller," he established a shop that sold, besides plays, books about theatre ("for /against"), theatre portraits, and perhaps objects.

⁴²⁵ Turner and Fisher later expanded to Boston, and in other moments split into Turner's or Fisher's. Hence Haines's *Idiot Witness* was issued in separate series: Fisher's Edition of Standard Farces (1840) and Turner's Dramatic Library (1844) (the dates are unreliable). Worldcat.

⁴²⁶ *Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Stock of the Late Mr. John Duncombe* (London: Puttick and Simpson, 1853), accessed July 9, 2011, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

⁴²⁷ McCalman, "Unrespectable Radicalism," 96.

⁴²⁸ Quoted in Samuel French, *Truly Yours*, 132.

⁴²⁹ For Lacy's (terse) biography, see Martin Banham, "Lacy, Thomas Hailes," in *Cambridge Guide to Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 625.

Portraits were not bound into his playbooks, as in William Taylor's volumes in the US, but were advertised as separate pieces in catalogues. Despite his not having risen from the press world, or because of it, Lacy maneuvered adroitly in the play publishing business, by prodigious acquisition of other companies' inventories, to become what a British theatre historian sees as "the biggest and arguably the most important theatre publishing of the nineteenth century,"⁴³⁰ a superlative that gains credibility if confined to the 1852-1872 span and to the British Empire. According the 1935 bibliographer Rhodes, Lacy absorbed "almost all previous series," meaning the British ones, "into his own editions," though that absorption was more complex than the word suggests.⁴³¹ A few years following his purchase of Duncombe's series, Lacy acquired the "remainders" (paper copies) of a small firm, Fairbrothers, which had issued Haines's adaptation of Eugene Scribe's opera libretto, *Queen for a Day*.⁴³² More substantially, Lacy bought companies that had already bought other companies. Years earlier, Haines's successful *Alice Gray* had inaugurated the series *Pattie's Universal Stage or Theatrical Prompt Book*, in which Pattie tried to approximate prompt-book commands through print memoranda in the margins and shoulders, a remarkable and aberrant theatre publishing experiment. (Pattie did not, though, spare whole blank pages for prompters to mark up themselves—as indeed, no publisher did). The Pattie series, according to Rhodes, was acquired by W. W. Barth (though this genealogy is complicated by the fact that each issued a different Haines play); after a brief stint as *Barth's Universal Stage*, the set "fell into the hands of" Lacy, who forsook Pattie's promptbook experiment and the "universal" modifier.⁴³³ A more complex development unfurled along yet

⁴³⁰ Banham, "Lacy," 625.

⁴³¹ Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 214.

⁴³² Haines (adapter), Adolphe Adam (composer), *Queen for a Day* (London: Fairbrothers, 1841). On the edition's provenance, see Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 214.

⁴³³ Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 227. Pattie published four Haines works: *Alice, Life of a Woman, Factory Boy*, and *Wizard of the Wave*, while Barth published *Jack Sheppard*. Pattie's *Wizard* contains the unusual bracketed prompt reminders in the margins.

another avenue: the *Dolby British Theatre* series, one of the few not to include Haines, was acquired by Cumberland, who folded other Haines titles into the five-hundred-piece series, *Cumberland British Theatre* and *Cumberland Minor Theatre*. Some of Cumberland's 1820s plays had been printed before by G. H. Davidson, but the printer apparently acquired and re-issued that series under the double-name series title, *Davidson's Shilling Volume of Cumberland Plays* (when series names often integrated the price).⁴³⁴ Then "soon afterwards Thomas Hailes Lacy acquired the stock, and the rest is chaos," in the resigned words of Rhodes, who found it "impossible to deal" with "the intricacies of the vast number of issues and reissues" by Lacy.⁴³⁵ These publishers, or "conductors," as Davidson called himself,⁴³⁶ had intercourse with different agents—not in the network of the "cabal" that characterized the English Stationers' collusions under the privilege of royal Charter, as publishing historian William St. Clair described them, but in some other configuration of rivalry and cooperation which remains blurry.⁴³⁷ Though these houses often issued the same titles, they arranged them under distinct numbering systems and series, all of which had to be re-aligned when coalescing in Lacy's (and later re-numerated under Samuel French, and later still by Dicks). Of Haines's oeuvre, Duncombe issued seven works, Cumberland three, Pattie and Barth a few more, and Lacy would publish about a dozen, including Duncombe's *Nick of the Woods*, years after the playwright had died.

Lacy's increase, reaching ninety-nine volumes of almost fifteen hundred titles at the end of his labors, was enabled by an interaction of factors besides his business savvy. At the political-ideological level, loose copyright (relative to later standards) engendered widespread

⁴³⁴ Michel, "Samuel French, Ltd.," in *DLB* 106; Samuel French, *Truly Yours*.

⁴³⁵ Rhodes "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 231; Stephens, *Profession of the Playwright*, 125-140. Stephens and Rhodes delineate the succession from Dolby to Samuel French.

⁴³⁶ In Davidson's standard layout, a note in the preliminaries reads, "The Conductors of this work print no plays but those which have been acted." E.g., Shakespeare *Romeo and Juliet*, ca. 1831-32, or Lemon Rede, *Sixteen-String Jack*, n.d., New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

⁴³⁷ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation and the Romantic Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). St. Clair's point recurs across the monograph.

reprinting. Most of his issues were likely reprints from plates (imprints), distinct from new type compositions (editions). Although writers were lobbying for stronger protections—as in the renowned instances of Charles Dickens and Dion Bouicault—and though publishers suffered from what historians describe as cut-throat competition, the norm was what the book historian Meredith McGill calls a “culture of reprinting,” a phrase intended to characterize both practice and attitude (in which reprinting was legitimate and expected, not aberrant); McGill insists on reconstructing the era on its own, rather than retro-imposed, ideologies of moral, legal, or social propriety.⁴³⁸

At the material level, Lacy could amass these dozen plays by Haines and a stock in the hundreds because of the technology of stereotype plates (or later, electrotype).⁴³⁹ In stereotyping, printers cast a mold of the frames of composed type (first from plaster and then, in a technique first patented at the time of *Nick*'s premiere, from *papier maché*). Stereotype enabled a substantial transformation in the printing of plays, and hence in the arena of dramatic literature and theatre. Financially, it required greater outlay of capital, increasing the stakes of publishing; yet in the long-run, for successful products, it proved economical.⁴⁴⁰ It meant that a play remained “in print,” at least potentially, without having to re-compose type; it embodied property, merging the intangible right to copy with the tangible plate, which was almost invariably owned by the publisher, who wielded greater capital than the playwright; it freed up and lessened the wear of the most costly component of production, type (which printers did not make, but had to buy from a tangential tradesman). Since duplicate plates could be cast from first stereotype plates, a house could reserve, or relocate, second sets, and these withstood fire better than did paper

⁴³⁸ McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*.

⁴³⁹ Phillip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New Castle, Del: Oak Knoll Press, 1995), 201-206.

⁴⁴⁰ Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1998).

copies (as would be seen later with Spencer's stock).⁴⁴¹ Even decades later, Samuel French articulated this enduring value, extolling stereotype plates as "my real storehouse—my bank."⁴⁴²

Thomas H. Lacy and Haines's *Nick of the Woods*

Having bought plays, Lacy, like other new owners, re-covered his acquired playtexts with a house wrapper, typically of thin paper, often of the same stock as the playtext itself ("self-covered" in bibliographic terms). The cover differed from the paperbacks developing at the time, although with shared cognates in other small booklets: pamphlets, tracts, almanacs, and circulated sermons.⁴⁴³ Most substituted new title pages (called "cancels") to display their own publisher information and style.⁴⁴⁴ On Haines's *Nick of the Woods*, though, the recycling of Duncombe's plates is manifest: Lacy's title page is identical to Duncombe's in minute details (letter and line spacing of the title, an elevated *B* in "By J. T. Haines," and the enjambment of titles in Haines's "Author of" list). While Lacy owned his plates of Haines's *Nick of the Woods*, he did not as Duncombe did perform the printing in-house; the playscripts acknowledge a printer in the usual last-page, quasi-footnote; these notes name different printers across Lacy's career.

Because they inheriting the stock of other houses, and delegating the printing to a separate firm, Lacy's plays took heterogeneous form in certain elements, bearing a less uniform style in preliminaries. One of the elements distinguishing a house style was the assignment of Gothic (Black letter) typeface—the old-fashioned lettering almost always appears *someplace* in the paratexts on playbooks of the eras, perhaps to harken back to English print traditions,⁴⁴⁵ but

⁴⁴¹ Roger E. Stoddard, "A Guide to Spencer's Boston Theatre: 1855-1862," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 79, pt. 1, (repr. Worcester MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1969): 45-98.

⁴⁴² Quoted in *The Sketch*, July 19, 1875, repr. French, *Truly Yours*, 32.

⁴⁴³ These formats (but not their link to plays) are touched on in Frank L. Schick, *The Paperbound Book in America: the History of Paperbacks and their European Background* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1958), 35.

⁴⁴⁴ Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 227.

⁴⁴⁵ For an analysis of Gothic typeface in early modern printed plays (fused with a historiographical critique), see Zachary Lesser, "Typographic Nostalgia: Play-Reading, Popularity, and the Meanings of Black Letter," in *The Book*

that place varies widely, from the genre sub-title (*A Drama*), to the publisher city, to labels on preliminary sections (*Costumes*), or elsewhere. Duncombe used the style for “two acts” and “[as performed in] London Theatres” on the *Nick* title page. (See appendix J.) Some publishers fixed one element in Black Letter type in all publications, solidifying a house style, but Lacy let the typeface wander.⁴⁴⁶ Nor did he maintain a consistent set of paratexts; he sometimes reproduced the picture and preface of the earlier publisher’s imprint, though he dropped pictures from Haines’s *Nick* as well as other Duncombe acquisitions (he may not have acquired those graphic plates). Within the playtext, Lacy’s drama format also varied: character labels appear sometimes in italics (the style typical of the earlier houses of Cumberland, Pattie, and Turner and Fisher), and other times in mixed-capitals.⁴⁴⁷ His imprints emanate no concern for consistency, one sign of the rationalizing that we expect of industrial-era business. This flexibility apparently did no harm to Lacy’s status, and judging from the ascent of his successor Samuel French, who was even less consistent, the non-uniformity may have advantaged specialty publishers.

Still, these new publishers framed their varying looks by what we now call a brand or corporate identity in other ways besides consistent details. Marking his acquisition, Lacy’s appended the series title, “The New British Theatre (late Duncombe’s),” and emphasized his ownership in the imprint, “published by the proprietor Thomas Hailes Lacy.”⁴⁴⁸ (Samuel French, after acquiring Lacy’s inventory, would similarly add the parenthetical qualifier, *Late Lacy’s*.) The acknowledgement presumably was designed to foster patron recognition, to infuse the new

of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England, ed. Marta Straznicky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 99-126.

⁴⁴⁶ I viewed sundry Lacy imprints of Haines and other playwrights in the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, Harvard Theatre Collection, and Princeton University Library; the misleadingly named *Victorian Plays Project* reproduces facsimiles of only Lacy’s issues, and of only *playtexts*, not covers or material qualities, as discussed in chap. 7: Victorian Plays Project, accessed October 9, 2010, <http://victorian.worc.ac.uk/modx/>.

⁴⁴⁷ Character labels vary by style (Roman or Italics); case (regular or small-capitals); line position (left or tabbed); and punctuation (often a period rather than colon), besides the abbreviation of the name.

⁴⁴⁸ Rhodes, “The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama,” 212. Rhodes describes this copy of Stirling, *A Plain Cook*.

name with the caché of the old, and to promote continuity. But Lacy, while economically recycling plates, did alter the look of the publisher paratexts. Stereotype plates, despite their fixity in metal, could be redacted by effacing sections or welding on new strips—and so Lacy’s workers abraded the busy section of Duncombe’s title pages that iterated his enhancements of the Acting Edition, the blurb quoted above, besides of course the name and address of the publisher at the base. Lacy’s title pages assumed a more spacious look. His covers, however, did not. Framed by a decorative border (of varied designs, as if rotating through all the ornaments in the Victorian repertoire),⁴⁴⁹ the prominent feature was not the specific play, whether by title or author, nor the publisher series (as in Duncombe’s covers), but rather the distribution network, a list of international agents—the market. On the page, this list spanned the middle section and sometimes two columns; on the globe, it spanned the British Empire and the US, including agents in the antipodes and India.⁴⁵⁰ The New York agent was a young Samuel French, while Spencer represented Boston on some playbooks. The directory is informative rather than attractive, and that information is partly practical (should one want to identify an agent on another continent), and partly symbolic, for conveying the expansive, if not imperial, reach of the firm. (Presumably, the cover of Haines’s *Nick* bore a similar list, although admittedly, the copy I examined was coverless, as are most scripts bound in volumes; one copy was, moreover, reprinted in microform, a publishing phase discussed in chapter seven.)

How a former actor, Lacy, obtained this imperial reach remains mysterious, and its veracity—did he really have intercourse with Calcutta?—remains uncorroborated. As Book

⁴⁴⁹ Ornamental variety was probably encouraged by the proliferation of advertising typeface (such as “Egyptian”) and also the then-recent landmark graphic compendium, Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Day and Son, 1856).

⁴⁵⁰ As an index of this imperial reach, one style of Lacy playbook covers foregrounded a list of agents, each corresponding to either a city—Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Melbourne, Sydney, New York—or a commonwealth country, i.e., New Zealand and Canada. E.g., J. M. Gully, *Lady of Belle Isle* (London: Lacy, n.d.), Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University.

Historian David Finklestein points out, though, the scope of the print trade was “completely transformed” in the second half of the century, as the British were the first to “globalize” the print market through the conduits of empire.⁴⁵¹ Foregrounding these points-of-purchase on the cover was one of the shifts toward more blatant marketing and commerce on cheap playscripts, along with more prominent display of price (which is sometimes hard to spot on older publications, perhaps because prices were less fixed in general, or perhaps because the market sign seemed vulgar). Explicit instructions for mail-order appeared, signaled by the large phrase *Post-Free* on Lacy’s covers (free presumably because of postal rates for series or slim print matter). Advertisements and catalogues burgeoned. Perhaps because he had not emerged from the world of publishing, which still propagated an image of aristocratic and artisan ethos (even if that was contradicted by practices),⁴⁵² Lacy’s acting editions presented the playscript, stripped of bookish extras like prefaces, as a commercial good. Thus the intellectual property notice was placed at the very top of the play in the zone between preliminaries and playtext, though like other elements it varied in phrasing: “This drama is the property of Mr. T. H. Lacy,” “Mr. Lacy’s List,” or, on Haines’s *Alice Grey*, “The country right of this Drama is the property of Thomas Hailes Lacy.” The latter phrase “country right” is unusual, and its power would have been lost if the playbook travelled abroad. Though a few US titles made Lacy’s list, many, including Medina’s, did not flow his way, as inversely, no US publisher issued Haines’s *Nick*—playscripts did not travel abroad as regularly as did novels and story papers.

Though *Nick*’s story was unmistakably American, and Bird and Medina were US

⁴⁵¹ David Finkelstein, “The Globalization of the Book 1800-1970,” in Eliot and Rose, *History of the Book*, 331. In the same vein, Bird’s *Nick* was advertised in India, in the *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, December 21, 1854, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. There is, however, no trace of a *Nick* play appearing on page or state in India (nor the West Indies), and studies of playbook markets in these colonies have yet to appear.

⁴⁵² On this persona among generalist publishers in the US, see Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-16.

citizens, the publishing a *Nick of the Woods* drama in the US lagged fifteen years after the play's beginnings and after the first printing of Haines's version in England. Why the gap? Why the difference between the countries? The trajectory of *Nick* often looks like a path without obstacles, as playscripts, star tours, press workers, and ideas circulated the English-language world. But across the separate places were crucial differences: the status of dramatic copyright (altered in 1833 in England, and in 1856 in the US); the development of technology and material, as when stereotype was slower to permeate the US; the populations of consumers possessing literacy, disposable income, and interest in recent plays about America. Though book historians mark a shift at 1840 as the start of the industrial era (in the monumental *Book in America* project),⁴⁵³ specialist play publishing seems to have developed along a staggered timeline, which is further differentiated by nation. To examine this deeper context would require a concentrated study beyond my scope, but even the superficial effect is significant, as a reminder that versions of *Nick* underwent distinct timelines: Haines's was published swiftly, crossed two houses, and disappeared; Medina's came to print after a fifteen-year gap, crossed three houses, and endured even into at least the 1910s.

William V. Spencer

At around the time that Lacy was buying Duncombe's plates, in Boston, William V. Spencer pivoted from general book-selling in a book shop to publishing drama, though we know neither his deeper background, nor the particular arrangements of his publishing (was the Washington Street imprint address also the location of the shop?).⁴⁵⁴ Like Lacy, Spencer specialized in drama; that is, theatre texts constituted the major proportion of his stock, rather than being a secondary line, as for Duncombe and Dicks; or an occasional issue, as for the large

⁴⁵³ Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book*.

⁴⁵⁴ Stoddard, "Spencer's Boston Theatre," 45.

New York generalists Harper Brothers;⁴⁵⁵ or an exception, as for the small London women's company under the colorful figure Emily Faithfull.⁴⁵⁶ But even specialty drama publishers could hardly survive by concentrating exclusively one on genre (and booksellers had to supplement book sales by peddling patent medicine).⁴⁵⁷ Social networks and ideologies, too, may have expanded publishers' scope, as perhaps explains Spencer's incongruent "monthly magazine of social science and Christian charity," *Good News*. Still, the distinction between drama specialist and cross-genre generalist bears on our understanding the terrain of play publishing.

Spencer acquired some scripts directly from prompters or playwrights. The inaugural play in his *Spencer's Boston Theatre* series included a preface by the playwright, J. S. Jones (which argued that lack of strong copyright protection weakened domestic drama).⁴⁵⁸ A long range of plays following *Nick of the Woods* gave credit to the Boston Theatre prompter-manager, J. B. Wright (whose name is well recorded on dozens of playscripts by multiple publishers).⁴⁵⁹ Spencer also bought plates from other houses—the American Anna Cora Mowatt's *Armand*, published first in London,⁴⁶⁰ and Haines's *The Idiot Witness*. His edition of Medina's *Nick*, though, seems to have been "now first published," as his front pages attested, probably by late 1856, by printers and processes never named.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁵ Besides Shakespeare and books about theatre, Harper Brothers issued plays by Bulwer-Lytton and Walter Scott, *inter alia*.

⁴⁵⁶ H. T. Prinsep, *Jafir Barmukee* (London: Emily Faithfull & Co., Victoria Press, 1861), Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University. The latter, a colonial official's dramatization of an *Arabian Nights* tale (the same one that informed Samuel Spring's 1836 novel that Medina dramatized as *Giafar Al Barmeki*), was possibly the only drama issued by this unusual women's company.

⁴⁵⁷ On Spencer's inventory, see Stoddard, "Spencer's Boston Theatre," 50; on other specialty publishing, Scott E. Casper, "Other Variations on the Trade" in Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book*, 203-223; on booksellers' diverse stock, see Eliot, "The British Book Market," in Eliot and Rose, *Companion to the History of the Book*, 310.

⁴⁵⁸ J. S. Jones, *Moll Pitcher*, described by Stoddard, "Spencer's Boston Theatre," 49.

⁴⁵⁹ The New York Public Library holds fifteen printed plays, mainly Spencer and Samuel French imprints, that acknowledge prompter Wright, besides ten playbooks autographed by him.

⁴⁶⁰ Stoddard, "Spencer's Boston Theatre," 50n.

⁴⁶¹ Stoddard "Spencer's Boston Theatre." For *Nick's* imprint date, Stoddard estimates the range 1856-59. The final stage production listed in Spencer's *Dramatis Persona* table was June, 1856, and the book arguably came off the

William V. Spencer and Louisa H. Medina's *Nick of the Woods*

Nick of the Woods appeared in the series *Spencer's Boston Theatre*. Costing twelve and one-half cents alone, around the same price as the cheapest theatre tickets, this playbook spread larger than Duncombe's palm-size pamphlet (about 7 tall by 4½ wide). The format afforded a more spacious text layout, one that might more comfortably be used backstage. Spencer passed through two cover styles. The first, like Cumberland's and Duncombe's, framed the page with a structure, though rather than a stage, this allegory depicted a young lad and lass supporting parallel, spiked, ribbon-twined spears, a kind of martial May-pole motif. To comprise a full quad frame, the poles are attached to a tasseled valance overhead, which holds an icon cluster (not theatrical), and an uninteresting branch cross-bar below.⁴⁶² The theatre theme is absent, as if the template could serve, for example, a children's poetry series. Like Duncombe, Spencer displayed an array of font styles (scalloped and three-dimensional), laying greatest emphasis on "Theatre" in the series title, setting the keyword in ornamental typeface. The lively typography almost reaches the bustling aesthetic of the playbill, but still, the empty space and subdued punctuation identified playbooks as a separate genre belonging to a different, and presumably more respectable, realm. (Usually, a distinct kind of "jobbing" printer, stocking a wider array of decorative fonts, produced playbills.) Even as Spencer, Lacy, and Samuel French intensified the presence of the market on the play, they did so in the idiom of publishing, not of theatre publicity. On Spencer's template cover, the children-with-arms device overshadows the title. The play title, as on Duncombe's, is hand-stamped almost as if an afterthought, in stark sans-serif letters, and its phrase is reduced to the main phrase, *Nick of the Woods*, shorn of any of the circulating sub-

press soon afterwards, given that one archive copy bears the handwritten date August, 1856. Medina, *Nick* (Boston, Spencer's, n.d.), George Buell Alvord Memorial Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

⁴⁶² Stoddard, "Spencer's Boston Theatre," 46. Stoddard includes a facsimile of this *Nick* cover, which I have not seen on library copies.

titles (*The Renegade's Daughter*; *The Jibbenainosay*), not only on the cover but throughout, as Spencer abandoned the cascading titles familiar to playbills and earlier imprints. But the short-title is integrated pictorially, for being stamped in a disk poised between the youths, and on title pages it extends to the genre and length labels, *A Drama* [set in Gothic], *in Three Acts*.⁴⁶³ Price is mentioned twice in the mid-page, in amount (12½ cents or ten for one dollar), and in the promise that the series was “uniform in price” (notably, before book publishers had established fixed prices); the price re-appears yet again alongside the title. This triple mention of exchange value on one cover foreshadows the encroaching manifestation of commerce on playscripts, the increasingly blatant references to market matters that distinguish these later Acting Editions from both finer editions and cheaper plays issued in earlier eras.

Not surprisingly, on this imprint, Medina's name does not appear until the title page, which differs from the wrapper stylistically: typographically simple, and spaced generously across the page, without pictures or trademark, it exudes a more elegant effect (see appendix L). Gothic typeface, though absent from the cover, makes its requisite appearance on the genre label, *A Drama*, but the rest of the typography stays plain, with modest serif and mild thin/thick contrast, varied only by case, point size, and kerning. Visually, it might be a title page to Bird's novel (on the imprints aimed at adults, at least) or to non-fiction. Again, this aesthetic locates the playbook within the arena of literature and respectable publishing, reflecting Spencer's effort to promote a respectable reputation *based in the book world*, even while catering to the theatre world, with its more promiscuous visual and cultural associations.

Preliminary Matter

The title page promises fewer accouterments than did Duncombe's Acting Editions: no

⁴⁶³ Genette, *Paratexts*, 57-58. Genette parses the variations and significances of secondary and tertiary titles, including the “or” clause.

“remarks” or engraving, just *original casts and all the stage business*. The original casts—plural—referred to a peculiar preliminary element, both distinct in its time and a forebear to the standard preliminaries we see now. In this formulation, the cast, or list of actors, was conjoined with the *Dramatis Personae*, the list of characters, in a single table (whereas the two are split in the modern convention). The list of actors attested to the play’s having been staged, a virtue reiterated in Spencer’s phrase, *as originally produced in the Bowery Theatre*. This table, a seemingly trivial element, emanates significant implications, especially in its variations (see appendix M). Tables came in different visual style (lines or dots or underscores), a non-linguistic detail that reflected other print trends, notably the pervading of the tabular format in print culture.⁴⁶⁴ They varied in what other kind of information, if any, was frugally wedged between character and actor name: Duncombe sometimes squeezed brief persona descriptions on the line (“Telie Doe—the Fawn of the Savaget”), while his London neighbor, Webster and Company, sometimes inserted the costume description there rather than list it separately. Spencer’s dense grid left room for neither; the costume list came separately, below the table, while character descriptions were left to the reader’s inference. These elements convey a hierarchy of paratexts, with implications for the boundaries of drama, implying which aspects are essential to literature or staging.

But the variable of cast lists had greater significance in relation to theatre history, as the publisher shaped the chronicle of theatre. How many productions warranted recording? Duncombe, like his London neighbors, tended to memorialize only one production, the purported premiere. Spencer and many US publishers eschewed such narrow limitations. At the other end

⁴⁶⁴ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chap. 2 and 3. One of Eisenstein’s less disputed arguments is that rather than supplant visual material, early printed text inspired new text-image arrangements for “visual aids.” Such combinations proliferated in the machine-age.

of the range, the *Dramatis Personae* for Spencer's Thomas Morton's *Roland for an Oliver* covered nineteen productions, including one in Montreal. Morton enjoyed a longer stage record than did Shakespeare, whose *Merry Wives of Windsor* saw only five significant productions, according to Spencer's preliminaries.⁴⁶⁵ The *Nick* script iterated full casts for five productions, with a nod to one earlier show. This spectrum suggests the wide room for choice in the design of the production record, and those choices involved social and cultural considerations, as well as the material constraints of the printer's hardware—as evident when they used the ditto sign rather than repeat “Mr.” for every actor's name, since printers needed the *M* and *r* type-pieces for other pages. The table has a complex ontology: while the character list would guide either reading or future staging, the parallel list of actors had little practical, future-oriented function, but instead worked as a historical theatre record. Besides choosing how many, the publisher documented *which* productions deserved record. This choice, a quasi-historiography, was shaped by his personal social networks, notes on the manuscript, and the value regime that structured the theatre circuit.

Perhaps differently from the London-centric English theatre system, the US theatre circuit was represented as an array of houses across key cities. Of course this was anchored in the northeast corridor of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, sometimes extending branches to Baltimore or Providence, but it reached as far southward as Charlotte and New Orleans, and now and then westward to Cincinnati. This conceptual map had a national (and nationalist) stratum, yet at the same time its full scope encompassed London, whose theatres were key stations in the circuit. This cultural cartography, delineating the map of significant English-language theatre activity, was propagated, implicitly or explicitly, in print, especially in journalism—New York

⁴⁶⁵ Thomas Morton, *A Roland for an Oliver* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, 1855), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

papers reported on theatre from New Orleans and London, and vice-versa—and also in this little *Dramatis Personae* table in the preliminary pages of playbooks.⁴⁶⁶ These theatre hubs were also centers of book publishing, as the two networks have long been closely aligned.⁴⁶⁷

This geography, or the cultural politics of place, left its mark on Spencer's publications. He titled his series *Spencer's Boston Theatre*, rather than by a rubric of nation. On the other side of the ocean, the national label of *British Theatre* (or *British Drama*, or *British Stage*) was prevalent and long-running, but, apart from Samuel French's brief experiment with *American Drama*, post-colonial publishers found less use in a national or regional identity, however counter-intuitive that may seem. But "Boston Theatre" was also the name of a particular theatre, the Boston Theatre, which would stage *Nick*, and it echoed the Boston Athenaeum and other local cultural institutions named for the city. Perhaps the name implied a local market, where patrons visited the bookstore (and before the national market had solidified), or perhaps it was meant to be propelled by the caché of Boston, a renowned cultural city, across a national market, through mail-order from Spencer's catalogue.

This metropolitan identity shaped the production record, the table combining *Dramatis Personae* with Cast list for *Nick of the Woods*. Spencer's table gave two Boston productions to pride of place, the first two columns. The visual layout implies that Boston's *Nick* shows were early landmarks in the play's stage career, occluding the first five years of *Nick* productions, except one from the Bowery, which was demoted to a kind of footnote outside and beneath the grid. Thus Spencer documented, or memorialized, the Boston productions of 1843 and 1846

⁴⁶⁶ My suggestion of an imagined *network* refracts the formulation of "imagined communities," the print-engendered concept of nation, articulated in the landmark study, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); the close-up of theatre-print symbiosis echoes Julie S. Peters, *Theatre of the Book 1480-1880*.

⁴⁶⁷ I have not seen an argument about the coinciding of book and theatre hubs. For an understated Marxist (or Annales-style) analysis of the waterway location of early US book centers, see William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 17-20.

(both at the National Theatre), followed by productions in New Orleans, Providence, and New York, all represented by year and full cast lists. Here we learn that the Nick star Joseph Proctor appeared in multiple productions; that a girl cross-dressed as Little Tom in 1849; and that the boy playing the little settler brother grew, a few years later, into the elder brother role. Where ellipses appear instead of actors' names, we suppose either that characters were dropped from particular shows, or that their performers' names were lost as papers migrated. In the layout, the lead role Nick spreads across six distinct parts, each allotted a separate line (as they were on playbills); below come the nineteen other roles, male above female. Yet for that earlier Bowery show, the quasi-footnote documents merely three roles (interestingly, all woodsy figures)—“The Jibbenainosay,” Ralph Stackpole, and Telie—dispensing with the central couple and the mixed-race villains. If Boston's National Theatre dropped the Negro character Emperor from its cast—a disappearance I discussed in chapter two—then it was Spencer's edition that fixed his erasure in both playtext and *Dramatis Personae*. That named Bowery production, moreover, was not the historical premiere, but an important second year appearance that functioned as the symbolic premiere, when Joseph Proctor debuted as Nick; his name resonated more than the earlier actor's did. Since Samuel French later re-used Spencer's plates of *Nick of the Woods*, this Boston-centric record of *Nick* was propagated even in New York, where patrons might have wanted to know its local production history, and was propelled by Samuel French to England and across the decades of *Nick*'s stage career, if not also into scholarship a century later. Dicks, basing his edition on a Spencer or French copy, conflating the dates of Proctor's Bowery premiere with the first Boston production in 1843; a 1990s anthology of American women's plays interpreted the 1843 date as Spencer's and French's first imprints, though both publishers began business over a decade later.⁴⁶⁸ Library cataloguers, moreover, often date playscripts—when imprints are notoriously

⁴⁶⁸ Amelia H. Kritzer, “Women Dramatists in the United States before 1900” (bibliography), in *Plays by Early*

undated—by the ostensible premiere date, often gleaned from the production table. Commercial play publishers functioned, wittingly or not, as the chroniclers and geographers of theatre, and their preliminaries functioned as enduring reference texts.

The last production in that table was dated 1856, soon after which Spencer published *Nick*. At the same time came Congress's 1856 Dramatic Copyright Act, which bore upon the political economy of printed plays in the US, although property litigation revolved more frequently around staging rights, different from textual copying rights (one of the major muddles of the case of intellectual property of plays).⁴⁶⁹ Copyright claims, which had already appeared on some published scripts before the Act, henceforth appeared more frequently, but not always—there is none *Nick of the Woods*, not even on Samuel French's imprints thirty years later. This paratext sub-genre of warning notice on playscripts, while usually bearing the phrase "entered according to Act of Congress," varied in rhetoric, page position, and dating (which became obligatory only after 1909),⁴⁷⁰ in contrast to the predictable formats solidified in the electric age.

William Spencer soon steered his business away from drama toward other genres, at which point his drama stock bifurcated along separate trajectories, which the librarian-scholar Roger Stoddard describes: the smaller set followed his brother Charles across a few reconfigurations, and, remaining in Boston, finally became absorbed by Baker's, a specialist in the amateur market; the larger set, containing Medina's *Nick of the Woods*, relocated to Samuel French's growing operation in New York, sometime in the early 1860s.⁴⁷¹ Despite the brief existence of the firm, its *Nick* imprints survived well: over twenty copies of Spencer's edition of

American Women, 1775-1850 (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 411. As I discuss in chap. 7, Kritzer reprints Medina's *Ernest Maltravers* in the anthology, and enumerates Medina's full oeuvre in this appendix, basing the *Nick* data on an unidentified playbook.

⁴⁶⁹ McGill, "Copyright," in Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book*.

⁴⁷⁰ G. T. Tanselle, *Guide to the Study of US Imprints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1: xxi.

⁴⁷¹ Stoddard, "Spencer's Boston Theatre."

Nick are preserved in institutional collections. Judging from the traces of their backstage use, clearly the small, defunct firm's publications still circulated even as the ultimately greater firm, French's, issued more copies, under stronger US monopoly (of *Nick*), over a longer time.

Samuel French

Samuel French, a teenager when Medina's *Nick of the Woods* first appeared, went on to establish the only play publishing company that, like the Harper Brothers in general book publishing or P. T. Barnum in live entertainment, would endure to the present era. Paradoxically, French's importance and the company's uninterrupted longevity have not supplied us abundant records, partly because specialty publishers did not participate in the communication networks of the general book trade, and partly because the very continuity meant the company could cloister its own archive.⁴⁷² Nor has French's company attracted substantial scholarship—not a dedicated scholarly article or monograph—a lacuna that seems less explicable, given its enduring and monumental role in the theatre market.

As an individual, French resembled the entrepreneurial type of that US era in several ways: by relocating to New York from elsewhere (New England); entering the trade from the outside; buying rival firms; and astutely exploiting shifts in law (intellectual property), business (marketing techniques), and his target field (theatre). From his first addresses in lower Manhattan, Samuel French trafficked in plays as a middle-man agent for companies he would later acquire: from the south, William Taylor's in Baltimore; from the north, Spencer's in Boston; and from abroad, T. H. Lacy's in London. William Taylor, perhaps in partnership with or succeeded by an M. Douglas in New York, issued the *Modern Standard Drama* series with the standard accouterments of the earlier era: a gentlemanly editor who wrote prefaces (Epes Sargent or F. C.

⁴⁷² On general publishers' trade records in the US, Jeffrey D. Groves, "Trade Communication" in Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book*, 130-138. For the image of the company's closeted archive, my thanks to my colleague, Roxane Heinz-Bradshaw.

Wemyss); an inserted picture that depicted not a drama scene, but an actor or, more rarely, a playwright; and brief essays about theatre celebrities, misleadingly called “memoirs.” Defying the trend, Taylor did not brand the series under his own name, as did the other publishers mentioned here. When French acquired *Modern Standard Drama*, he perpetuated the series as *French’s Standard Drama* (having forgone the brief trial with the *French’s American Drama*, which, given the literal meaning of his surname, might have created confusion). His continuation of Taylor’s series did preserve its spacious typographical look of title pages, which resembled Spencer’s style. Yet, entering a new phase of play publishing, French dropped Taylor’s literary paratexts from the majority of his new issues.⁴⁷³

Samuel French and Medina’s *Nick of the Woods*

In the words of the company’s 1980 commemoration booklet, French “bought up every set of printing plates that he could lay his hands on, thus absorbing his competitors.”⁴⁷⁴ Samuel French acquired Medina’s *Nick of the Woods* from Spencer in the third decade of the play’s stage career, when it still drew audiences in major theatres in the northeast (and when Joseph Proctor had become prominent enough to tour the United Kingdom). With the Boston cargo also came Haines’s *Idiot Witness*, as French’s later acquisitions would deliver other Haines titles into his expanding inventory. Materially, French acquired the playtexts both as paper copies and as plates, presumably with concomitant reproduction rights. To re-issue Spencer’s remainder paper copies of *Nick*, French would have re-covered them in his wrapper (as Stoddard deduces).⁴⁷⁵ For stereotype plates, meanwhile, the title page was amended by stereotype specialists effacing and welding new pieces, or so it seems from *Nick’s* title page: the central section is identical to

⁴⁷³ These observations were drawn mainly from examining the series volumes held in the University of Virginia and Duke University libraries (both sets shelved in regular circulating stacks rather than in special collections).

⁴⁷⁴ French, *Truly Yours*, 1.

⁴⁷⁵ Roger Stoddard, “Samuel French,” in *Publishers for Mass Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Madeleine Stern (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980), 132. 131-36.

Spencer's design, just repositioned slightly upward (see appendix N). The covers were printed on paper of varying colors (the hues long since faded), in a stock usually not much sturdier than the one used for inner pages. In design, French dispensed with Spencer's lad-and-lass motif, opting instead for the simple Taylor look, although he did not fix one uniform house style, but rather allowed wide variations, especially when reprinting prior publishers' series, a heterogeneity that, again, belies the commonplace that industrial-era businesses tended toward rationalized uniformity.

French added Medina's *Ernest Maltravers* and *The Last Days of Pompeii* alongside her *Nick*—the first gathering of her extant oeuvre in one house, although the oeuvre grouping seemed not to matter, at least not for minor authors. Nothing symbolically united her three works, and they differed in slight details. The author was named Louisa or L. H., and an unusual provenance notice appeared on the cover of *Ernest*: “*The Publisher is indebted to the celebrated Tragedienne, Miss Matilda Heron, for the MS. of this excellent drama.*”⁴⁷⁶ (Matilda Heron, who passed through the Bowery Theatre, was known for acting and for her adaptation of Dumas's *Camille*.) That acknowledgement notwithstanding—it's a publisher boast, not a provenance record—we don't know how, or when, French got hold of these scripts. He acquired the larger portion of his stock from other firms, publishing relatively few first editions, with the striking exception of George Aiken's 1853 dramatization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Dion Boucicault's 1857 *The Poor of New York*.⁴⁷⁷ His reprint of Spencer's *Nick* paradoxically announces it as “Now first published,” when such dissembling was not a liability.⁴⁷⁸ As the company evolved over the next few decades, the *Nick* covers were re-created multiple times, while preserving the

⁴⁷⁶ Medina, *Ernest Maltravers* (New York: Samuel French, n.d., ca. 1858-78), Rare Books and Special Collections, Amherst College Library. The passage, set in italic typeface, lies just above the imprint.

⁴⁷⁷ Michel, “Samuel French, Ltd.,” *DLB* 106.

⁴⁷⁸ For the most thorough discussion of reprinting (though mainly for other genres), see McGill, *Culture of Reprinting*.

former size and design, and of course reproducing the fixed, stereotyped playtext.

In 1872, Samuel French relocated to London and opened an office there, presumably shipping himself duplicate copies of the stereotype plates. As the figure *Nick of the Woods* was becoming a household name, propagated by both Bird's novel and multiple dramatizations, the playscript was still marketable to commercial theatre companies, as it continued to appear on metropolitan stages: 1872 saw four productions in New York, Proctor in Boston, and the American George Boniface on a stage in Dublin—all probably using Medina's version, and perhaps a Samuel French imprint.⁴⁷⁹ Samuel French handed the helm of the New York operation to his young adult son and only child, T. Henry French, in another episode of the father-son lineage in the print industry. In this arrangement—not without its tension—Samuel French owned the plays, while T. H. French controlled productions in the US, thus gaining the firm at least *potential* control of dramatic property in two major theatre regions. (In actuality, legal claims were difficult to enforce, though the Frenches' did hire scouts to identify illicit productions.)⁴⁸⁰

In that expansion to London, French bought the full business of Thomas H. Lacy, the store, plates, legal rights, and paper copies—the latter stock including “residue” of Lacy's own purchases of Duncombe and Cumberland, whose names French continued to use in catalogue listings.⁴⁸¹ Unlike the New York office, the London shop functioned actively as a book-shop, perhaps partly because the site remained stable, or because London, the empire's hub, was the greater city. In the transitional phase, both the store and the playscripts were branded “Samuel

⁴⁷⁹ I index “household name” by journalist allusions, without citation, to *Nick* characters, as well as thoroughbred horses named Nick of the Woods and Telie Doe; see n. 63; Boniface's Dublin production (under a woman manager) was advertised in the (Dublin) *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, July 20, 1872, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale Cengage.

⁴⁸⁰ Michel, “Samuel French,” 140.

⁴⁸¹ Quote and paraphrase from a report in *The Sketch* November 19, 1875, repr. French, *Truly Yours*, ca. 33.

French (Late Lacy's)," though the transitional tag was soon dropped.

Presumably Haines's *Nick of the Woods* arrived within in Lacy's stockpiles, but French never re-issued it. Perhaps he sifted out redundancies, selecting the most viable of any rival dramatizations. Besides echoing Medina's title, Haines's version, at two acts, was barred from the Standard Drama series dedicated to longer plays, yet was too somber for the Minor series. If so, the moment would mark one of the few visible instances of attention to *individual* works, in a career more patently focused on quantity and celebrity than quality or play content. The company sorted plays into series, or sub-genres (Temperance or Ethiopian), but there is little manifestation of editorial judgment in publishing, no sign of aesthetic appraisal, as there presumably was when T. Henry French produced a stage tour of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (after he advanced from merely publishing into theatre producing). Samuel French's apparent publishing policies differ from the attentive screening and canon-building that scholars describe for earlier instances of play publishing, from the Renaissance onward, as they emphasize the cultural gate-keeping role of publishers.⁴⁸² While attention to one single work is evident in the judgmental prefaces of French's predecessors, Taylor and Cumberland (which sometimes even insulted the plays they introduced), it is not manifest in this later, quasi-industrial mode of cheap play publishing. But the fact that Haines was not incorporated into French's inventory did have repercussions on the fates of both dramatizations—it meant that Haines's printed plays were less readily available to amateurs or professional theatres, or to reprint publishers like Dicks. French's sifting may have obstructed the stage career of Haines's *Nick*, as it blocked its circulation into the US playscript market.

That crossing of national markets was crucial. Enabled by the accelerated transport of

⁴⁸² E.g., Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Demata, "John Murray and the Publication of Drama," 257-78.

steam ships and railroad, the accelerated communication after 1858 through the trans-ocean telegraph cable, and laws regulating mail and copyright in both countries, Samuel French New York/London operated as a transnational corporation *avant la lettre*; other publishers had agents, but few had international branches, if the French offices were indeed branches.⁴⁸³ The father-son team maintained a complex dyadic (and internationally networked) structure, one difficult to categorize precisely, since the offices worked in tandem, yet autonomously. The imprint on playscript covers listed both offices side-by-side, New York on the left for US issues, as on later imprints of *Nick* (shown in appendix O).

In the annals of Acting Edition publishing, Samuel French seems to have been the first wholehearted businessman, involved in entrepreneurial speculation and riding the shifts in capitalism—as it bore on both book and theatre production—that coincided with his career and life. An advertising businessman’s memoir recounts that French became the third owner in an advertising “union,” an ad-based scheme in newspaper publishing; from this partner’s perspective, French’s play business was just “a small business,” adjunct his printing-press shop, which presumably handled his firm’s playscripts.⁴⁸⁴ (Until the twentieth century, French’s scripts bore no acknowledgement of a printer, the way British scripts did.) According to the same memoir, French sold that press (for \$20,000), along with his share in the advertising scheme, when raising the capital to buy Lacy’s firm at £5,000 (sums that are not easily converted into contemporary or even contemporaneous equivalents), though given Lacy’s death at an early

⁴⁸³ For brief account of these communications/travel developments, see David Finkelstein, “The Globalization of the Book 1800-1970,” in Eliot and Rose, *History of the Book*, 315-328; on US postal policies, see Scott E. Casper, “The Census, the Post Office, and Governmental Publishing,” in Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book*, 182-188. 178-193

⁴⁸⁴ George Presbury Rowell, *Forty Years an Advertising Agent, 1865-1905* (New York: Printers’ Ink Publishing Co., 1906), accessed June 2, 2009, Internet Archive, www.archive.org. French’s press, Rowell wrote, printed *The Advertiser’s Gazette*. Stoddard, “Samuel French,” 132, also mentions a job printing press, naming a business partner, George Wheat, whom I otherwise have not seen mentioned.

stage of his installment plan, French never did pay the total price.⁴⁸⁵ Although publishing plays alone was a small industry, operating, like most in the era, from a “narrow capital base,”⁴⁸⁶ French immersed himself in work with capital; witnesses called him a “speculator,” who lived “like a capitalist.”⁴⁸⁷ (While the label of the system, capitalism, was not yet prevalent, the term for the individual capitalist was.) Both French *père* and *fils* drew earnings from non-textual dimensions of theatre business: building theatres, running tours, and, in tacit collusion with the state, litigating for infringement of rights (though the lawsuits pertained to staging, rather than publishing, and admittedly, several involved their defending *against* lawsuits directed against them).⁴⁸⁸ In tandem and separately, the Frenches developed the multi-strand business in accord with the changing ecologies of theatre, publishing, and small-scale business. In the twilight of *Nick’s* commercial stage career, the late 1880s, Samuel French rendered his London business into a Limited company, a relatively new advent, according to which it came under the leadership of a board, underwent audits, and was owned by share-holders (although such shares supposedly went to his new wife’s trustees).⁴⁸⁹ The little suffix *Ltd.* advanced the company from the small-firm tradition into the new phase of political economy, on the model of larger companies that typify the industrial era, notably railroad and telegraph firms. (For the US counterpart, the New York office would “incorporate”—become Samuel French, Inc.—only well into the next century.) Samuel French ventured capital speculations outside theatre. Besides a

⁴⁸⁵ Stoddard, “Samuel French,” 132.

⁴⁸⁶ Stillwell, “Corporation,” 155.

⁴⁸⁷ “The Rights of Dramatists,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1878, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Rowell, *Forty Years*.

⁴⁸⁸ ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *New York Times*. New York journalists covered, e.g., French v. Maguire (over a Sardou translation), July 4, 1878; French’s injunction against managers, April 29, 1886; Augustine Daly’s injunction against French, January 28, 1887; and the *Little Lord Fauntleroy* dispute, July 12, 1889. The company also underwent litigation related to theatre buildings.

⁴⁸⁹ On “Limited” companies in general, see Stillwell, 155-6; about Samuel French becoming Ltd, there is no substantial account, but for incidental mention: in French, *Truly Yours*, 8, a passage explaining French’s dowry for his supposedly gold-digging second wife identifies the agreement as an annual dividend with security deposited in shares, and it mentions trustees—modes and mediators of money transfer that characterize the formal corporation.

youthful trial in shoes, and the printing press and the advertising “union” just mentioned, he speculated in a hodge-podge of patents: water gas, color printing, butter, paint, and medicine for drunkenness.⁴⁹⁰ Curing drunkenness did correspond to the culture of temperance, with the dramatic corollary of temperance plays listed in French catalogues; the practice of middle-class stock investment, meanwhile, reflected the fairly recent “culture of investment” spreading into the middle-class after 1870 in the UK, a trend propagated through other print genres.⁴⁹¹ Patents, it is worth noting, are fairly analogous to the textual world’s copyright, the property regime Samuel French maneuvered and championed in both countries. An interviewer quoted his declaration: “I don’t see that a man is entitled to be blamed for legally defending his property whether it be a drama or a horse.”⁴⁹² (Notably, French’s analogy differs from the “natural rights” strand of copyright philosophy, by which persons are entitled to the fruits of their *labor*—not the modes of transportation they purchased.)⁴⁹³

French’s easy crossing from copyright to patent, drama to horse, or text to non-textual resource is manifest on the playscripts. Signs of commerce entered available space on Samuel French playscripts—one of the striking distinctions from the era of Duncombe’s plays, as if Acting Editions forsook any pretense of literary belonging. Prices were marked visibly and often repeatedly: one play for twelve and one-half cents in the US, until the Civil War inflated it to fifteen cents; ten separate titles for one dollar, unbound; and a bound volume of eight titles for a dollar, or \$1.25 in the Union Square era (marked atop the catalogue in appendix O). The English counterparts cost six pence. Both Lacy’s and then Samuel French’s covers stipulated prices in

⁴⁹⁰ Rowell, 215; Hogg quoted in French, *Truly Yours*, 8.

⁴⁹¹ Mary Poovey, “Writing about Finance in Victorian England: Disclosure and Secrecy in the Culture of Investment,” *Victorian Studies* 45, no.1 (Autumn 2002): 18.

⁴⁹² “The Rights of Dramatists,” *New York Times*.

⁴⁹³ On copyright principles, see *Of Authors and Origins: Essays on Copyright Law*, ed. Brad Sherman and Alain Strowel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); on its US cultural facets, see McGill “Copyright,” in *The Industrial Book*.

both national currencies, readying the booklets for international circulation. More remarkably, advertisements crept into the top and bottom margins of the cover, marketing not only plays, but how-to books, as announced at the header and footer of the cover in appendix O. Playbooks also advertised non-textual goods. On another Union Square *Nick* imprint, the top announces a how-to make up book, and on the bottom a larger notice offers:

MAKE-UP BOX

Containing Rouge, Pearl Powder, Whiting, Mongolian, Ruddy Rouge, Violet Powders...Burnt Cork, Pencils for the eyelids, Spirit Gum, India Ink, Camel Hair Brushes, Hare's Foot Wool, Craped Hair...Scissors and Looking Glass, packed neatly in Strong Fancy Card-board Box, \$4.00; Elegant Tin Cases, \$5.00.

(Although *Nick of the Woods* involved “red-face” acting, the box contains no specific Indian hue, though one might have improvised a blend of Mongolian and Ruddy Rouge.) As a make-up kit suggests, the French company targeted amateurs, those working outside the networks of knowledge and supplies in commercial theatre, especially those outside cities. The footer notice in appendix O announces an amateur guide for “home theatricals,” but the growing phenomenon encompassed civic groups, in clubs and colleges, as well as military camps. *Nick* was performed in marginal, low-budget productions, the kind of show noted in local provincial newspapers, at least as early as 1873 (Ohio),⁴⁹⁴ and it presumably underwent countless *unrecorded* stagings, an unfolding I return to in chapter six. Earlier publishers had provided aids for patrons outside the theatre circuit, by including diagrams of actors’ stage positions and a legend translating those position acronyms (which changed in step with stage technology). But French’s expansion to non-textual products—and the representation of them in the spare space on playscripts—as well

⁴⁹⁴ This stage production is recalled in George F. Bareis, *The History of Madison Township* (Canal Winchester, OH: G. F. Bareis, 1902), 147, accessed April 11, 2008, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

as the proliferation of how-to books and guides to buying plays,⁴⁹⁵ clearly reflect the expansion of amateur theatre, not only as a social phenomenon in Anglo society, but as a *market*, which grew in mutual symbiosis with play commercial publishing. Amateurs were presented as needing commercial publishers; more discretely, publishers needed, and catered to, amateurs. The Frenches projected the company as a mail-order depot for all ostensibly necessary supplies for neophytes, theatre outsiders, stage hopefuls, and club organizers—making itself a small-scale proto-conglomerate (a company encompassing distinct products and services).

However the company obtained its make-up or its stock paper-scenery—their sources are mysterious, though Lacy had stocked such goods in his store—these products seem to have supplied a viable income stream. The first illustrations that appeared regularly in French’s playscripts were actually pictures of these things—a make-up box or scenery drops—rather than of play scenes or portraits. This marketing of non-text goods was not unique, but still notable within semi-literary spheres.⁴⁹⁶ Besides printed playbooks and non-textual things, the company “let out on hire” manuscripts, another relatively new revenue source and an instance of the complex intermixing of print and manuscript in theatre commerce.⁴⁹⁷ Arguably, the playbook became a vehicle for advertising the firm’s other goods, as much as a commodity in itself. While T. Henry’s New York office instructed printers to update some advertisements in the margins of a *Nick* cover, a task requiring a new round of press-work, no one bothered to correct the error in the middle of the page (the stereotype plate), so that a misprint recurs across successive imprints:

⁴⁹⁵ W. J. Sorrel, T. H. Lacy, and Captain Sock Buskin, *The Amateur Handbook* (London: Lacy, 1866), New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. (The pseudonym “Sock Buskin” refers to Attic comedy/tragedy footwear.) This was possibly one of the earliest of such guides, which proliferated under Samuel French and others later.

⁴⁹⁶ Arthur Weyhe Toy Theatre Collection, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. Toy or “miniature” theatre publishers also sold non-textual goods—a small theatre structure, cardboard character figures, and paste-on scenery—though in a small and separate (and British) industry, rather than as an extension of adult theatre publishing. None issued *Nick of the Woods*, according to catalogues.

⁴⁹⁷ Quoted in *The Sketch*, July 19, 1875, reprinted French, *Truly Yours*, 33. French’s London successor, Hogg, said that manuscripts comprised the bulk of the early business. “Samuel French, Limited. A chat with Wentworth Hogg,” *The Era* (London), November 3, 1900, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale Cengage.

“a iescription [a description] of the costumes [...]” Although printed plays, like books, are not commodities akin to foodstuff or products that get “consumed” (used up), as William St. Clair argues,⁴⁹⁸ still, French’s juxtaposition of non-text goods with printed texts, without even any prefatory “remarks” that would pretend literary aspirations, seems implicitly to package plays frankly as commodities, albeit of a particular kind. Or, in the terms of the prior chapter, both playscript and make-up fall in the category of *workaday objects*—though of the manufactured and marketed, not the home-made, variety. The cultural capital, or evocation, of cheap playscripts relied on currencies different from the symbols on upscale, literary publications, though what they meant to patrons is, admittedly, the most elusive part of the story.

The other sections of French’s New York covers were squeezed with imperatives and instructions (“No Plays Exchanged”). Some emphasized phrases with a manicule (from a printer’s ornamental type-piece), which did not appear in the dramatic texts. Through newspaper advertisements, the firm announced goods to patrons remote from the theatre and publishing hubs, who could make purchases through the mail. French’s make-up kit was advertised by a local costume merchant in India, where it was aimed at upscale “fancy ball” dress rather than stage theatre.⁴⁹⁹ As the business relied mainly on catalogue orders, playscript paratexts referred to post, stamps, and mailing—in phrases that changed a bit across copies and across the Atlantic, in accord with each nation’s respective postal policy, which changed as post increased exponentially, not least because of catalogue commerce.⁵⁰⁰ The label *series*, in fact, for implying

⁴⁹⁸ St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, 30-31. St. Clair’s polemic enters a debate about the commodity status of books too large to elaborate here.

⁴⁹⁹ Harding & Co, advertisement, *Madras Mail* (India), January 8 to February 17, 1885, World Newspaper Archive, Readex. Following a passage that refers to one upcoming fancy ball, the offer of “make up boxes and make up books by ‘Samuel French, Strand’” tops the list of a dozen costuming items.

⁵⁰⁰ Casper, “The Census, the Post Office, and Governmental Publishing,” in *The Industrial Book*, 178-193; David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006). Postal policy shifted as the US expanded (and divided), initiating the three-class

periodical, may have helped garner second or third class rates, cheaper than books. French's London wrappers still bore Lacy's large notice, "Post Free" on the spine, or the closest thing to a spine on the thin pamphlet, referring to transport within London; the algorithm of rates involved the kind of document, its weight, and the distance travelled.⁵⁰¹ Book historian Michael Winship insists that distribution, the *bête noir* of publishers then, is crucial to our understanding book phenomena; by this era, the main channel of playbook distribution was mail, one of the factors of text circulation that was shaped by the nation-state, and a topic that warrants deeper study.⁵⁰²

A playbook's end pages and back covers had almost always been left blank on fine editions, and even often on early-phase cheap acting editions, but now Samuel French expanded his advertising into that empty territory. The mainstay of marketing was the catalogue, which French elaborated from Spencer's model, formatted as numbered short-titles running in columns, without sub-title or author's name, filling the back cover, as in appendix O, and sometimes other pages. The display of other goods enveloped *Nick of the Woods* or any single play. This end-page column format was the main style of catalogue, although there were others: unnumbered lists for smaller sets; "descriptive catalogues" that identified sub-genre and numbers of male/female roles for each title; and fuller catalogues issued in separate pamphlets, such as the one used by George Becks (shown in appendix P). As a for-profit bibliography, the columned catalogue format presented plays as numbered units in an ever-growing series—a fusion of new cheap publishing (borrowing from periodicals and part-books), mass-produced goods, with precedent in the publishing tradition. Catalogues managed, or purported to, an abundance of titles that patrons

system in 1863. For a summary, see Casper. For a larger argument, Henkin characterizes the historic era as "the postal age," when a "postal culture," or normalized integration of mail in daily life, pervaded the US.

⁵⁰¹ Martin J. Daunton, *Royal Mail: The Post Office since 1840* (London: The Athlone Press, 1985). Drastic British postal reform, which would result in the penny flat-rate, began during *Nick's* early stage career.

⁵⁰² Michael Winship, "Distribution and the Trade," in Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, *The Industrial Book*, 117-129.

likely found overwhelming. (As do I.) They embodied the rationalization that has become the hallmark of industrial capitalism, even if they were not actually entirely rational. (In one of the oddities, Spencer's catalogues left its last slots *empty*, yet still numbered—placing naught in logical sequence—a semiotic conundrum that French later resolved by filling the blank lines with other announcements.)

In organizing inventory, first, each play was designated to one of the two main series, Standard or Minor. The label “standard” indicated a full-length piece, whether serious or comic.⁵⁰³ In the US, the term *Minor* referred merely to length and mode—shorter, usually lighter pieces—without invoking any legal or cultural distinctions between theatres and districts, as in London, although was considered suitable for amateurs. Within that series, each play was positioned by number (*Nick* leapt from Spencer's 62 to French's 269 in French's Standard Drama), an arbitrary position in a relatively random sequence. The overarching series was segmented into volumes numbered by Roman numerals. Assembly of the volume set followed no conventional rubric, such as author (Medina's plays are scattered across XVIII, XXXIV, and CXLVL); or sub-genre; or even alphabetic first word of the title (the logic by which French stored his stereotype plates).⁵⁰⁴ Rather, the organization principle seems to have been achieving *medley* within a volume, some informal algorithmic mix of sub-genres, comic with serious. Spencer had assembled more diversely, juxtaposing short farces with Medina's play. Samuel French, as he converted Spencer's Volume XIII into his own Volume XXXIV, removed three shorter plays, relocating them to a volume in his Minor series, and substituted for them longer

⁵⁰³ Kathleen McGowan, “Samuel French,” in *American Literary Publishing Houses, 1638-1899*, vol. 49 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Peter Dzwonkoski (Detroit: Gale, 1986), 2: 171.

⁵⁰⁴ French noted “the Elizabethan age cheek by jowl with modern farcical comedies—alphabetical arrangement makes strange bedfellows,” quoted in *The Sketch*, repr. in French, *Truly Yours*.

comedies or dramas, consistent with Standard Drama parameters.⁵⁰⁵ The volume's value or significance lay less in the specific associations of the plays, the literary meaning, and more in the quality of organization (manageable sub-sets of an enormous stock), and the respectable binding, which made plays resemble books (like the hard-bound *Nick of the Woods* novel), with the material and social benefits, as well as the expense, that it implied.⁵⁰⁶ But French did not otherwise adjust the separate entries to foster visual unity within the volume. Unlike earlier British drama series, that were designed as volumes (with table of content pages and continuous pagination), such as Bell's or Mrs. Inchbald's, French's assemblages were jerry-rigged from autonomous pamphlets, the pagination starting anew at each work, adding no unifying header—as is apparent in the volume shown in appendix N—creating an *ad hoc*, or *post hoc* book.

Over the remaining decades of *Nick's* stage career, French's prices rose, though the structure of catalogue sequence persevered. While the London office remained stable in name and location, the son's office underwent changes in both, a reflection of the geographic expansion of the young city and perhaps the ego expansion of the young partner (whom even his corporate descendants admitted was a flamboyant “man about town”).⁵⁰⁷ Though the business had started in one of New York's “book rows,”⁵⁰⁸ T. Henry relocated by following the theatre district, more than the book world, as it moved northward up Manhattan. The first move leapt from Nassau Street to Fourteenth Street, Union Square in its theatre heyday around 1880, a

⁵⁰⁵ According to Spencer and French catalogues, French removed John Oxenford's *My Fellow Clerk*, Charles Dance's *Bengal Tiger*, and Benjamin Webster's *Laughing Hyena* from Spencer's volume, substituting Tom Taylor and Charles Reade's *Two Loves and A Life*, John Palgrave Simpson's *Second Love*, and John Baldwin Buckstone's *Dream at Sea*.

⁵⁰⁶ William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 61-62. Charvat points out that high-quality binding could contradict the textual low-status of such works as the popular novel *Charlotte Temple* (and by extension melodrama); on binding see also: Barker, *A Potencie of Life*, 20; and Frank E. Comparato, *Books for the Millions: A History of the Men whose Methods and Machines Packaged the Printed Word* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1971); and my chap. 3, 54-5.

⁵⁰⁷ French, *Truly Yours*, 12, quotes a 1880s description of T. Henry French: “he gives dinner parties, breakfast parties, supper parties, theatre parties [....].”

⁵⁰⁸ Stern, introduction to *Publishers for Mass Entertainment*, xiv.

district comprised Wallack's theatre, a German Theatre, the Academy of Music, costume shops, a jobbing printer (the kind handling playbills), and actors' boarding-houses, all near, according to a Midwest journalist, "the immense play-publishing business of Samuel French & Son" by "the store of Christern, who is ready to supply any known French play."⁵⁰⁹ Unlike the London store, French's in New York distributed plays indirectly through separate stores (besides its mail order channels). Moving uptown again, the company resided on 22nd and 23rd streets through the *fin de siècle* years until 1908. In name, the New York office ran as "Samuel French and Son" across the 1870s and most of the 1880s, at which point T. Henry briefly put the business under variations of his name, before it reverted back to "Samuel French." The changes appear on imprints of Medina's *Nick*, though not always cogently; on some copies, one page lists a company imprint that another page contradicts. The subsequent evolutions—the split between New York and London following Samuel French's death, and T. Henry's relocating to midtown—were manifest on later *Nick* scripts, when the play itself retired from the commercial stage and circulated in the amateur realm, an unfolding discussed in the next two chapters. Though Spencer's imprints still circulated, French's issues of *Nick* would dominate the international market, especially for practical theatre.

John Dicks' Press

In London, John Dicks, who was nearly the same age as Samuel French, came to launch his drama series as an extension of his work within a large-scale operation, a genesis that made his series distinct from those of his predecessors, even as its format borrowed some features of Acting Editions. Like his predecessor and rival play publishers, he has attracted relatively little scholarship, apart from an unusual monograph by a scholar sharing the same surname; the slim

⁵⁰⁹ "A Theatrical Focus," *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1878, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex. I have not corroborated the existence or spelling of the bookstore.

book is academic in citation apparatus, yet published through a publish-on-demand Internet site.⁵¹⁰ Still, a few tertiary sources in conjunction with the playscripts illuminate his differences from other publishers of Medina and Haines.

Notably, Dicks began as a journeyman printer, rising through the trade ranks. He first worked in a Royal press, the Queen's Printers, which enjoyed the monopoly in printing Bibles and Parliament Acts, and where he was working when Medina and Haines's *Nick* first came to stage.⁵¹¹ After his next phase in a general, non-patent publisher, based in a key printing district, Dicks was hired to publish the work written or sanctioned by one novelist, George William McArthur Reynolds—purportedly “the most published man of the nineteenth-century.”⁵¹² All of Reynolds's publications, his own novels and other matter, were oriented to humble classes, in both price and content; his political vehicle, *Reynolds's Magazine*, voiced the Republican (or what we might now call “democratic”) views of the Chartist movement, championing full male suffrage, equitable parliamentary representation, and the concerns of workers, while verging on anti-monarchal blasphemy—even as Reynolds himself lived in affluence.⁵¹³ The magazine's readership overlapped the humbler patrons of theatre; one column promoted the 1858 equestrian *Nick of the Woods*.⁵¹⁴ Dicks issued his own publications, the magazine *Bow Bells* and his Shakespeare series, which aligned with Reynolds's ethos in populist pricing, if not in ideology.

The arrangement began with Reynolds as proprietor and Dicks as publisher-printer, until

⁵¹⁰ Guy Dicks, *The John Dicks Press* (London?: Guy Dicks and Lulu, 2005), n.p. The soft-cover monograph is a print-on-demand or digital “vanity press” edition purchased through the internet publisher, www.lulu.com. Although the lack of peer-review is reflected in its stream-of-data narration style, its information does seem reliable. Briefly mentioning Dicks's plays, the book refers us to the apparently irretrievable D. L. Powell, “*Fin de Siecle: John Dicks' Serial Play Publishing in the Nineteenth Century*,” Masters' Thesis, University College London, 1983.

⁵¹¹ G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 2.

⁵¹² D. Kausch, quoted in G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 52

⁵¹³ G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 6-10; on the magazine politics, 39-43; the lavish lifestyle comes across in descriptions of annual company banquets, 20-26.

⁵¹⁴ “The Drama, Music, Etc.,” *Reynolds's Newspaper*, March 7, 1858. Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers.

he bought all copyrights in 1863. The company issued niche magazines (*The Builder* and *The Boy's Herald*), alongside other genres, music (opera and songs) and graphic “chromolithographs ...for framing”—a range akin to Duncombe’s but at a scale of “tremendous circulation.”⁵¹⁵

Dicks’ position within the large, multi-genre, periodical publishing house, which rendered him “one of the most important forces in the increase of cheap reading material for the masses,”⁵¹⁶ enabled his production of cheap plays. Of the publishers surveyed here, Dicks’ enterprise came the closest to *industrial* mass production, in terms of scale and business operations. Most publishing operated on smaller scales, a range that business historian Phillip Scranton divides into *custom*, as in printed-not-published playscripts (of a few copies); *batch*, as in theatre playbills; and *bulk*, which might apply to plays. The term *mass* pertains to the enormous output of factory industries, notably textiles, as well as stable print matter like Bibles and school texts—though not playscripts.⁵¹⁷ In technology, most printers worked with the old mechanization of hand presses, or a syncretic combination of varied small presses. The periodical printers, almost exclusively, were furnished with the most advanced, most capital-intensive technologies, developments they themselves spurred: the shift from hand to horse and then steam power; automatic paper feeders; and the rotating cylinder press taking rolls of paper for faster, greater output (distinct from the horizontal “bed-and-platen” type handling single separate sheets).⁵¹⁸

Dicks’ establishment allegedly ran eleven steam machines which were operated by a pool of hundred or so workers, in contrast to the few hand-presses and small staff of ordinary outfits.⁵¹⁹

This, in a word, was industrial printing.

⁵¹⁵ Montague Summers, “John Dicks, Publisher,” *Times Literary Supplement*, November 7, 1942, 552, *Times Literary Supplement* Historical Archive.

⁵¹⁶ Ann Humphrey, “John Dicks,” *British Literary Publishers*, vol. 106 of *DLB*, 126. 126-8

⁵¹⁷ Philip Scranton, “Manufacturing Diversity: Production Systems, Markets, and an American Consumer Society” *Technology and Society* 35, no. 3 (July 1994): 476-50, esp. 485-493, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3106256>.

⁵¹⁸ Among abundant writings on press technology (though none about printing playscripts in particular): Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*; Weedon, “The Economics of Print,” in Eliot and Rose, *History of the Book*.

⁵¹⁹ G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 32, quoting a report of panegyrics at one of the annual banquets.

John Dicks and Medina's *Nick of the Woods*

While Samuel French supplemented publishing with non-textual goods and intangible sources, notably royalties, Dicks expanded play publishing through manufacturing, by his control (and eventually ownership) of a mechanized press, which exploited economies of scale. Rather than buy out other publishers' stock, Dicks *reprinted* them, specializing in out-of-copyright texts; concretely, he had his press workers re-compose, probably stereotype, and print, for a lower cost. Dicks, given his lucrative results, could also survive the several copyright complaints litigated against him (for texts and even visuals).⁵²⁰ After having launched a series in cheap fiction in paperback, he began *Dicks Standard Plays* in the early 1860s,⁵²¹ publishing Medina's *Nick* after the series was about ten years underway (by my estimate). Unlike other play publishing series, his issues were literally *serial*, produced periodically, like his company's magazines—once a week for twenty years (during which Medina's *Nick* and *Ernest* appeared), and then twice weekly, meaning either two separate plays, or a two-play booklet (Dicks twice combined one Haines's play with another playwright's work).⁵²² The series offered no sub-sets or bound volumes, just a steady succession of separate pamphlets. Reducing the price to one-sixth of the Lacy-French price, Dicks's emblazed the phrase "one penny" twice on the covers, announcing the plays as affordable to common workers. A typography historian dubs him "John 'value-for-money' Dicks."⁵²³

In book format, Dicks's plays took the same size as Spencer and French editions, larger

⁵²⁰ G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 32.

⁵²¹ Dates differ: 1864 in Summers, "John Dicks, Publisher," *TLS*; 1860 in Humphreys, "John Dicks," *DLB* 106, 126.

⁵²² Date from Humphreys, "John Dicks," *DLB*, 127. In Dicks' catalogue, Haines's *Angeline* is bound with Samuel Beazley's *The Divorce*, no. 669, and his *Maidens Beware* with Charles Selby's *Pink of Politeness*, no. 771.

⁵²³ P. M. Handover, "British Book Typography," in *Book Typography in Europe and the United States, 1815 1965*, ed. Kenneth Day (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 152.

than the British precedent. This booklet, too, was sewn in colored wrappers. Dicks's plays bore illustrations, one picture for each play repeated on both cover and title page, accompanied by no dialogue excerpt, but just a brief textual reference, "see page 6." (See appendix Q.) For Medina's *Nick of the Woods*, the scene depicts a woman figure kneeling over a sleeping man, outdoors before a cabin: Telie is whispering a warning to Roland Forrester. While drawn more finely than Duncombe's wigwam picture, Dicks's illustration, too, shows an imagined, real-world scene (rather than representing actors on stage). Thematically, the focus on Telie and Roland perhaps invokes the unrequited love that constitutes a strong sub-plot in Medina's version, and highlights Telie, not Roland, as the active agent, even if it reveals more cleavage than we might expect of Telie. The likeness to Duncombe's and other older Acting Editions ends there, however: closely surrounded by paratexts, the image does not seem designed for hanging, and the pages are economically filled. Even as his commercialism expanded, French left at least the title page to its wasteful spaciousness, devoting the lower band to his imprint on both cover and title page (as book publishers usually did). Dicks forsook that book convention, reducing the space even for his own branding, engendering a style resembling periodicals more than books.

In general, Dicks reproduced the Spencer/French dramatic text almost identically, yet altered lay-out, in typography and other variables, minute variations that manifest a moment of deliberation, of choosing typeface or line-space by some criterion; those *choices* involve some admixture of pragmatic, material factors with cultural currencies, culture broad or local, in one shop. Medina's by-line reads the same (Miss L.H. Medina), but is positioned high in the top band of the page, allowing the picture to dominate the textual information—again, as happens on magazine covers. His character/cast list does copy the content of Spencer and French's lists, but in form, Dicks altered this small element to a remarkable degree (as shown, in miniature, in

appendix R): to label the list, he called it *Dramatis Personae* rather than *Cast of Characters*; he listed merely one production, in accord with the British convention, rather than several;⁵²⁴ he positioned out the text so that it begins on the title page—an unusual position—and spills onto the verso; he filled the blank middle space—where Spencer had listed multiple productions—with stippled dots; he reduced the leading (line space) that separated the sexes of the cast; and he repeated full titles Mr., Miss, and Mrs., rather than use ditto-mark stand-ins (a sign that his shop had *M*, *r*, and *s* type-pieces to spare). The costume list similarly transforms as it reproduces the Spencer/French text, adjusting typeface style and spacing. The playtext proper brings yet the most striking change: Dicks wedged tiny, six-point text into double-columns (“magazine style”),⁵²⁵ thereby reducing his model’s thirty pages by half, to fifteen. Although Dicks’s covers invited theatre producers with the phrase “This play can be performed without risk of infringing any rights,” a contrast to daunting copyright blurbs, and although his was the only series named by the more theatrical term *plays* rather than the literary term *drama*—still, by design the booklets seemed more oriented to reading than using backstage. (And even the reading would have been strained, in that layout.) Compositors truncated character labels, so *Roland* and *Ralph* were indicated by *Rol* and *Ral*, which perhaps confused readers, but compacted space. *Telie* and *Edith* remained whole, perhaps as a gesture of typographic chivalry. The play’s finale reveals the subtle effects of Dicks’ tinkering, as shown in my approximation here, with Spencer-French at left and Dicks at right:

Nathan.I
 come, I come, I come! (*Dies*.
Music. *The wigwams are*
burning.)
 GRAND TABLEAU.

Nat.....I come, I come,
 I come!
 (*Dies—Music—The wigwams are*
burning.—Grand Tableau.)
 CURTAIN.

⁵²⁴ Dicks inserted a label, *First Produced in the Bowery Theatre, February 20, 1843*, which conflates the Boston date with Proctor’s New York premiere, a repercussion of Spencer’s Boston-centric record. See 173-4, above.

⁵²⁵ Handover, “British Book Typography,” in Day, *Book Typography*, 152.

CURTAIN.

The juxtaposition shows slight differences in line-break, punctuation, and the position of *Grand Tableau* in relation to stage direction parentheses. Spencer's headline-style *Grand Tableau* is distinct and grand, suited for theatre, and it resembles the format of backstage workaday copies (probably themselves mirroring printed plays); in Dicks, it is literally parenthetical, as indeed, it might be experientially parenthetical for someone *reading* rather than performing. The variations bespeak the stylistic policies of publishing houses, which were invariably modeling from other texts, drawing on the stylistic repertoires circulating in print and manuscript, including workaday playscripts. Dicks's dashes instantiate that era's alternative punctuation (best remembered now through Emily Dickenson's poetry), which also often appears in manuscripts. His layout, the position of stage directions on a separated, indented line, looks like a compassionate visual aid to mitigate the densely compact script—or it might have been a reflexive imitation of a British page layout convention. The minor transformations bespeak practices informed by multiple text customs.

The back covers carry the Dicks play catalogue, in which appears Haines's other plays and Medina's *Ernest Maltravers*, issued well before *Nick* (*Ernest* at 379, *Nick* at 547). Without the principle of mixing sub-genres within a volume, Dicks's sequence seems even more random than his predecessors; the number preceding *Nick* is a dramatization of a novel comparably favorable to Indians, James F. Cooper's *Wept of the Wish-ton-wish* (by W. B. Bernard). Dicks's marketed by cross-advertising, promoting books on playscripts and vice-versa, and by posting notices in newspapers, and even in his building-trade journals.⁵²⁶ Play publishers seem not to have used some channels of distribution common to regular book producers: peddlers (also

⁵²⁶ Summers, "John Dicks," *DLB* 106, 552.

called chapmen and mercuries), “jobbing” middlemen, intra-trade auctions, or prior subscription.⁵²⁷ The transaction of buying Dicks’s and other publishers plays is dim. Presumably the regular periodicity of Dicks’s series accustomed patrons to buy regularly from their local outlet, whatever that was. Abroad, he sold through the “sole agent in America,” the New York play publisher De Witt, who re-wrapped the plays in his own cover bearing his device,⁵²⁸ while Dicks alleged that he distributed through agents in India, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and the West Indies.⁵²⁹ A few years after launching his plays, and soon after buying Reynolds’ copyrights, Dicks produced Shakespeare in the cheapest packaging available, two titles for one penny (or a bound volume for two shillings, and even that price was later halved), riding the wave of fanfare at Shakespeare’s tercentenary.⁵³⁰ The project aligned with the ostensible populist mission of Reynolds’s publication—in company rhetoric, “placing the outpourings of the most brilliant intellects within the reach of the humblest and poorest persons in the land,” while it also served the profit motive, for its damage to competitors.⁵³¹ From less prominent authors, Dicks continued the weekly and then bi-weekly issues, reprinting more Haines titles than did any other publisher.

Dicks later moved to Samuel French’s street, the Strand, near French’s store, and the company later also became limited, but there is no trace of interaction between the rival firms. Though he did not collaborate with his off-spring, as did French, he did perpetuate the father-son

⁵²⁷ On US book distribution, see Winship, “Distribution and the Trade,” in *The Industrial Book*.

⁵²⁸ For example, Phillip Massinger, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (London: Dicks, n.d.; distr. New York: De Witt, n.d.), Nathan Appell Papers, Harvard Theatre Collection. The New York father-son firm of De Witt, as agent for Lacy and then Dicks, distributed UK playbooks in new wrappers that bore a device (trademark image) of Attic masks and cherubs holding theatre props. See Nathaniel H. Puffer, “Robert M DeWitt,” in Stern, *Publishers for Mass Entertainment*, 92-100.

⁵²⁹ G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 39, repeating the company’s own assertions without corroboration.

⁵³⁰ G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 36; also discussed in Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare for the People: Working-Class Readers, 1800-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 81-6. Murphy quotes the veracity of testimony by grateful working-class readers.

⁵³¹ John Dicks, 1868 company banquet speech, quoted in G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 36.

pattern in his posthumous arrangements. With a total estate valued at about twenty thousand pounds, and a will stipulating profit-sharing among the family, the inheritances engendered an internecine finale for the company (as Guy Dicks enumerates in detail).⁵³² Dicks's submission of copies to the British Museum, by then a publisher requirement, ensured their institutional preservation, while the company's enduring to 1929, for periodicals if not plays, kept the name familiar. Years later, one former reader-turned-scholar recalled the *Standard Plays* series affectionately, writing in a periodical at the other end of the cultural spectrum, the *Times Literary Supplement*: "It may be sentimental, but it is none the less true, that those of us who were brought up on "Dicks's Standard Plays" will always have a very warm corner in our hearts for these penny scripts, which possess a personality all their own."⁵³³

Conclusion

If publishers' playscripts possessed distinct personalities, distinctions highlighted across this survey, still, as a class, they shared features that differed from book production. The era is often marked by the decisive separation of publisher, printer, and bookseller, yet the producers of Haines's and Medina's plays merged two or more of those roles: Duncombe and Dicks printed; Spencer and Lacy sold plays from shops; and Samuel French may have held all roles, while T. H. French waded more deeply into theatre business.⁵³⁴ Physically, the single play resembled pamphlets more than books, except when volume sets rendered plays as a book, which was probably the less popular format. Their consumption—publishers' distribution, patrons' purchases and use, and playbooks' ultimate fates—were also different from book patterns, but this remains the dimmest node of the printed playbook circuit. Some archive specimens bear

⁵³² G. Dicks, *John Dicks Press*, 60-76. G. Dicks estimates the estate to have been worth twenty thousand pounds.

⁵³³ Summers, "John Dicks, Publisher," *TLS*.

⁵³⁴ The splitting of printer/publisher roles is a commonplace in Anglo book history, repeated in any standard account of early nineteenth century, though scholars dispute dates of the split.

signs of the middle-man merchant, the bookstore sticker pasted on the cover,⁵³⁵ but most reveal no traces of exchange. Much more obvious is how they were used by theatres, with several extant copies of Medina's *Nick* (though not Haines's) marked and interleaved as promptbooks, and others tick-marked for actors' memorizing, for both commercial and amateur productions. Though Rhodes dismissed hand-copying parts as an "old fashion,"⁵³⁶ archive holdings indicate that theatres still wrote, or increasingly typed, actors' copies, rather than buy separate booklets. Conversely, some existing copies were signed by prompters, yet *not* used, as theatre libraries harbored potential as well as actual production scripts.⁵³⁷ Theatre productions also used publishers' commercial information. In later "descriptive" catalogues, *Nick* was classified as a "powder play," meaning historical, its cast enumerated by sex (14 m, 6 f), qualifications meant to guide unprofessional groups.⁵³⁸ But the scripts served commercial companies too: the separate pamphlet kind shown in appendix P was heavily marked by the New York actor/prompter George Becks, who ticked titles and interpolated pages, promptbook-style, on which he hand wrote play titles, probably to record playbooks owned or plays produced.⁵³⁹ (See appendix P.)

Patrons may have bought plays for leisure reading, though the subject of actual reading is similarly speculative. Within book history, Daniel Barrett attributes a "decline" in reading plays in England partly to the quality of cheap Acting Editions (notwithstanding the huge quantity of plays issued), yet Simon Eliot surmises that those same editions, or specifically Duncombe's, were read by working-class readers (notwithstanding the challenge of reading such a cramped

⁵³⁵ The Princeton Seymour collection holds both a Medina *Nick of the Woods*, stamped in purple, "Burton & Company" (New York), and a Medina *Ernest Maltravers* bearing a sticker from Butland's Music Store (Toronto).

⁵³⁶ Rhodes, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama," 94.

⁵³⁷ Three samples of signed but unused copies of *Nick* are found in the Appell collection, Harvard Theatre Collection; the Seymour collection, Princeton University Library; and the New York Public Library. The latter two are both associated with the Boston Theatre.

⁵³⁸ Samuel French, *International Descriptive Catalogue of Plays and Dramatic Works*, (New York: Samuel French, n.d. [ca. 1870s]), Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁵³⁹ Samuel French, *Descriptive Catalogue*, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts; annotations by George Becks.

text layout).⁵⁴⁰ *Nick* did appear in some institutional library catalogues, as well, even before the surge of public libraries. In one instance, at least, Medina's plays were bought for a private collection dedicated to American publications, which was in turn sold by auction (and later given to Brown University).⁵⁴¹

Publishing enabled the wider movement of *Nick of the Woods* and other plays, not only into the workaday documents of commercial theatre, as discussed in the prior chapter, but, as *Nick's* commercial career faded, into amateur, or low-budget marginal theatre, a phenomenon to which I return in chapter six. The diverse use and distribution of printed plays, as it unfolded in this era, allowed the promptbook and catalogue marked by George Becks, the volume of an Americana collector, the printed parts of actors, and other copies of these five publishers' *Nick of the Woods*, to continue along new paths into the burgeoning realm of learning institutions—the very base of our own scholarship, and the theme of my next chapter.

⁵⁴⁰ Daniel Barrett, "Play Publication, Readers, and the "Decline" of Victorian Drama," *Book History* 2 (1999): 173-187; Eliot, "the British Book Market," in Eliot and Rose, *History of the Book*, 296.

⁵⁴¹ *Catalogue of the Private Library of the Late Hon. Albert G. Greene* (New York: Bangs, Merwin, 1869), accessed May 3, 2008, Google Books, www.google.books.com. See Brown University Library, <http://library.brown.edu/about/hay/history>.

Chapter Five:

The Outmoded Script Enters Libraries and Lists

A brief exchange in a 1902 newspaper column suggests the position of *Nick of the Woods* in the flows of playbooks, as things and information, after the play had retired from mainstream stages. A *New York Times* reader who signed as M.A.T.E., curious about the source behind Mark Twain's off-handed allusion to "Jibbenainosay" in his *Life on the Mississippi*, sent his question to the column that fielded queries about books and literature. Although Twain's narration explicitly refers to *reading* and a *book*—"This ass had been reading the *Jibbenainosay*" but the narrator "had not yet seen the book"⁵⁴²—the columnist replied that Twain alluded to Medina's play. After reciting facts about the Bowery Theatre premiere and the star Joseph Proctor's prodigious performance record, the columnist directs M.A.T.E. to T. Henry French's publishing company to obtain a copy (the New York branch for a while was named for T. H., rather than Samuel French). In a subsequent issue, an upstate reader wrote to correct the columnist, noting that Medina had dramatized this "old-time" play from Bird's novel.⁵⁴³ This compact dialogue highlights themes germane to the life of *Nick of the Woods* playscripts. At a general level, it reminds us that information and documents circulated across spheres, even if only by thin ligaments: the columnist, who was based in the mainstream book world, did know of the play publishing specialist (though not closely enough to know that T. H. French had just died). It manifests ordinary people's quest for information about books—whether drama or other genres—which they directed through a variety of text-related experts and resources, including newspapers and publishers; in the era discussed in this chapter, they would turn increasingly to

⁵⁴² Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York: Harper, 1874), chap. 55, 425. The narrator (Twain/Clemens) infers that a self-proclaimed serial killer had spun his tale from the novel.

⁵⁴³ "Queries," *New York Times*, December 6, 1902 and December 27, 1902, *New York Times*, ProQuest.

libraries. Also, particular to this case, the exchange signals how far the names of Medina, Bird, Nick and Jibbenainosay (and more so Telie) had receded from common culture. The character names or sobriquets did sometimes crop up in journalism, but they had become unmoored from their referents: “Nick of the Woods” or Jibbenainosay were invoked to describe an odd wild man or a brave fighter, usually without Indians, and only rarely by the 1900s. Insofar as they were known, moreover, Medina’s play and Bird’s novel were disjointed, as references to one scarcely invoked the other, and they were never issued by the same publisher. Bird’s novel, although it did see reprinting, had descended to the stratum of minor American literature, boys’ fiction or adult nostalgia.⁵⁴⁴ Medina’s “old-time” play was now no longer named in newspaper ads or on playbills; when invoked (by older theatre veterans) it emblemized antique, Bowery Theatre style melodrama. The *New York Times* correspondent who supplied the fuller genesis of the play was articulating *arcane* historical information.

What happens to the script behind that outmoded play? Through *Nick of the Woods*’s stage career and twilight, up to the 1890s, the playscript functioned mostly as a backstage workaday text for commercial entertainment (and some amateur productions), or as a commodity of publishing routed through commercial book circuits. After the 1960s, it would become mainly data, a textual artifact for study, confined to the realm of universities. In the interim—about 1880 to 1940—the playscript seems at first glance to have vanished. The melodrama *Nick of the Woods* was an odd relic if it did appear on mainstream stages, and a non-entity in high-art theatre (except for an instance of college production discussed in the next chapter). When any aspect of *Nick* was invoked in print, writers *explained* it to readers. In most expert historiography of US

⁵⁴⁴ Brander Matthews, chap. 3, “Tom Paulding: the Story of a Search for Buried Treasure in the Streets of New York,” in *St. Nicholas* 19, no. 1, November 1891(repr. New York: Century Co., 1882), accessed April 9, 2008, Internet Archive, www.archive.org; Louis Tracy, “The Message,” *Kansas City Star* (July 13, 1914), 15, Readex America’s Historical Newspapers. In both stories, a boy mentions reading *Nick*, a juvenile male association corroborated in publishing patterns as well as non-fictional accounts of Bird’s novel.

drama, meanwhile, *Nick* was mentioned derisively: within the sub-genre of “Indian play,” *Nick* was “less noteworthy” than others, according to Margaret Mayorga’s 1932 monograph.⁵⁴⁵ Mostly it was indicted by silence: omitted from prose accounts, from lists of recommended plays, and from anthologies of “representative” American plays. In the UK, besides a burlesque version that endured to at least 1900, *Nick* receded further still from public conversation. With the play and playscript seeming inert, the early twentieth-century was not a part of my original research plan.

Under a different gaze, however, it became clear that *Nick* did move, just not along the obvious byways of notable theatre stages, and it did matter, just not by the same registers of value. Old melodrama had not gone extinct, though attitudes toward it were variegated and shifting in both the culture of audiences and in the academy. Hence *Nick*’s course steers *around* the usual cultural history itinerary of the era—Modernist theatre or Broadway musicals or moving pictures—traveling through different sites and practices that are nonetheless significant. While no longer a household name, *Nick* was represented, albeit unevenly, by the increasing, more formal kinds of knowledge—in academics, libraries, and several reference genres, such as catalogues and lists. While not enacted on prominent stages (whether popular or elite), nor remediated into LP disc or film, the drama would undergo revivals, in old and new forms of entertainment—moments discussed in the next chapter. In fact, *Nick*’s route, though perhaps thinner than the routes of its commercial heyday, encountered new complexity, crossing multiple arenas while assuming new identities, purposes, and values along the way.

To make sense of this more quiet and complex era in the life of *Nick*, these next two chapters describe several episodes in twentieth-century playscript passages. Although

⁵⁴⁵ Margaret G. Mayorga, *A Short History of the American Drama: Commentaries on Plays Prior to 1920* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1932), 134.

conceptually I emphasize that social spheres were articulated, for heuristic purposes I dis-articulate them, relegating the phenomena related to entertainment production to the next chapter. This chapter considers playscripts' movements into libraries and onto lists of varying kinds, passages that altered the play and playscript's "social" identity across conceptual, economic, and symbolic dimensions, and hence subtly affected their course.

The Realm of Knowledge Production

This chapter focuses on the locus of what we now call *the production and distribution of knowledge*, a diffuse network encompassing higher education, libraries (in universities and elsewhere), book publishing, book dealers, and a host of jobs, sites, and documents that preserve, produce, and propagate knowledge—including the newspaper column invoked above. The nexus is difficult to encapsulate, though it perhaps resembles the formulations expressed by earlier scholars: the "commonwealth of learning" (Elizabeth Eisenstein's affirmative conception of the early modern printing era); "the literary field" (in Pierre Bourdieu's critical analysis of late twentieth-century high culture); or the "knowledge context" and "intellectual system" (in Phillip Altbach's critique of the global knowledge market).⁵⁴⁶ In a study of plays, this realm, whatever we call it, overlaps the realm of theatre, or invoking the same lexicon, the production of knowledge is articulated with the production of culture. As in any social arena, the constituents of this knowledge realm change over time. In the US, the period from the post-Civil War to 1920 saw the solidifying of the "organization of knowledge" through associations, archives, and academic structures, a network well infused by government and private funding, according to

⁵⁴⁶ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 25; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randall Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Philip G. Altbach, *The Knowledge Context: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution of Knowledge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), xiii. There are of course other names and images for this arena.

historians Alexandra Oleson and John Voss.⁵⁴⁷ English literature, the arena of formal drama studies decades before the advent of separate Theatre Departments, evolved from an aristocratic hobby to a *bona fide* discipline, even as intra-department tensions continued to transform it, in efforts to anchor its position in the academy, if not also society.⁵⁴⁸ These tensions bore on the ways lower-status works, such as melodrama and dramatizations, were valued within literary studies.

With all these developments, playscripts of various kinds participated more intensely in spheres of learning. In the romantic phrase of a 1930s librarian, “a fresh theatre consciousness came to life, spread over Europe and America and even penetrated library, museum, and university.”⁵⁴⁹ While that “theatre consciousness” was purportedly spurred by the Modernist movement that helped usher *Nick* off commercial stages, the inspired institutions would then conserve copies of the un-modern play. *Nick*’s course gauges how these new formations responded to outmoded plays in general, especially how US institutions absorbed works understood to be American creations. The playscript’s passage into the realms of learning involved new actions relative to its life: not *producing* or *reproducing* scripts, as my earlier chapters described, but *relocating* them to and *preserving* them in libraries, and then *representing, recommending, or referring to* them in other texts, such as catalogues and drama lists. These activities affect the conceptual and material presence of old theatrical writings.

Drama in Libraries

Libraries had developed across a long history, even in the United States; the vision for the

⁵⁴⁷ Alexandra Oleson and John Voss, “The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 32, no. 8 (May 1979): 10-31, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3822782>. I cite the work for its lucid synthesis of events, leaving aside its overtones of American exceptionalism.

⁵⁴⁸ Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 55-144. Graff narrates the contentious developments of English literature studies, though not of theatre departments.

⁵⁴⁹ Rosamond Gilder, Introduction to *Theatre Collections in Libraries and Museums: an International Handbook*, ed. George Freedley and Rosamond Gilder (New York: Theatre Arts, 1936), 3. 1-8,

New York Public Library had been conceived during the early years of *Nick*'s stage career.⁵⁵⁰ But the modern era saw increase in quantity and change in kind: at one level, toward greater public access or democratizing; at the other, toward specialization, as in theatre collections.⁵⁵¹ The library became a vital node for outmoded playscripts after their commercial stage life, if not by promoting them, then by preserving documents as potential for later production of culture (staging) or knowledge (scholarship). By purchasing plays, organizing categories, circulating books, and preserving rare, special, or antique copies, libraries provided a crossroads between theatre (whether amateur, avant-garde, or commercial), the book market, scholarship, and public reading. Besides the collections of playbooks and reference books about theatre, several branches of the New York Public Library housed actual stages, with librarians brokering theatre rehearsals and productions (although not, as far as records show, of *Nick of the Woods*).⁵⁵²

Nick is dimly representative of plays in regular, public or semi-public circulating libraries; I say "dimly" because the phenomenon of drama in regular libraries is dim in general, relative to other genres, and dimmer for outmoded drama, relative to canon works. Some nineteenth-century libraries did acquire *Nick*, according to preserved catalogues.⁵⁵³ In the first recorded instance of donating a copy of *Nick*, in 1873, the receiver was the public library in Boston,⁵⁵⁴ although later it would often be a private school library (as I discuss soon). But the whole picture of melodrama in libraries remains foggy, partly because the term itself is so broad:

⁵⁵⁰ Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: a History of Its Founding and Early Years* (New York: New York Public Library, 1972), 17.

⁵⁵¹ Wayne A. Wiegand, "The American Public Library: Construction of a Community Reading Institution," in *Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940*, ed. Carl F. Kaestle and Janice Radway, vol. 4 in *A History of the Book in America*, ed. Daniel D. Hall (Chapel Hill: American Antiquarian Society/University of North Carolina, 2009), chap. 22.

⁵⁵² An instance of 1920s library theatre is described in my study, Wilson, "Theatre Near Us: Librarians, Culture, and Space in the Harlem Renaissance," in *(Un)Making Race, (Re)Making Soul: Transformative Aesthetics and the Practice of Freedom*, ed. Angela Cotten and Christa Davis Acampora (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), chap. 11.

⁵⁵³ E.g., *Catalogue of the Public Library of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Press of Wiltstach, Baldwin, 1871), accessed March 11, 2008, Making of America, University of Michigan, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>.

⁵⁵⁴ Sean Casey, Librarian, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, Boston Public Library, email message to author, May 19, 2009. The Thomas Pennant Barton collection, including a copy of Medina's *Nick*, was acquired in 1873.

“library” encompasses a range of collections, from individual offices to elite private institutions to semi-public bodies (such as mercantile libraries), while even the public kinds vary in how accessible the books are. During *Nick*’s stage career, book repositories of any kind were scarce, and library authorities took ambivalent or hostile stances toward popular culture (explicitly about fiction, and so presumably for melodrama).⁵⁵⁵ Records of holdings were not systematic, and since catalogues, not unlike actors’ scripts, were workaday texts bearing only use value, they were rarely deemed worthy of archiving—even as libraries preserved other fields’ utility documents. A reconstruction of old popular drama in libraries’ general collections requires separate (needle-in-haystack) research beyond the means of this project.

A question related to playbooks’ passages into libraries is what drama patrons *read*, and in what way. Would M.A.T.E. who queried the *New York Times* columnist about Jibbenainosay have wanted to engage Medina’s play the way he had Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*? Perhaps *Nick* was scanned by amateurs aiming to mount a play, but did anyone choose melodrama for leisure reading, as some still did pick up Bird’s novel? During the era of realist drama, readers did seek plays, judging from the quantity and array available: standard actor’s editions issued by the enduring Samuel French company (whose schedules even named different prices for just reading use, in contrast to staging plays);⁵⁵⁶ smaller play publishers; generalist publishers’ editions; plays in magazines; and a cascade of the newer format of collection or anthology. The daunting abundance generated a spate of lists and sub-categories, information genres I return to below, which reflected and encouraged the phenomenon of readers or practitioners seeking plays,

⁵⁵⁵ For an account of genre tensions in US libraries, see Wayne A. Wiegand, “American Library History Literature, 1947-1997: Theoretical Perspectives?” in *Essays Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Library Round Table*, ed. Andrew B. Wertheimer and Donald G. Davis, Jr. (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2000), 4-50.

⁵⁵⁶ On Samuel French catalogue advisories, see chap. 6, n.698.

a quest especially evident in libraries.⁵⁵⁷ In the New York Public Library, an early chief librarian asserted that “the enormous increase in play reading by the general public is the chief reason for the desired addition of theatre literature,” and a 1925 report cheerfully noted that “There seems no need of whetting the popular appetite for Bernard Shaw and for Eugene O’Neill.”⁵⁵⁸ At the upscale end of the playbook spectrum, artisan and university presses issued quality “limited edition” formats of not only such modern writers, but even older works considered redeemable, including two by writers not far from Medina: a comedy by Robert M. Bird and a dramatization of Bulwer-Lytton’s *Last Days of Pompeii* (which Medina also dramatized) by George H. Boker.⁵⁵⁹ These fine editions were unlikely to reach ordinary libraries or readers, however. Notwithstanding the cascade of plays in multiple forms and the assertions of librarians, it is difficult to reconstruct patterns of patronage, though it seems safe to conclude that, in general, old popular drama did not make for modern popular reading.

If not a source of leisure reading, some *Nick* scripts were acquiring a value as a cultural relic, a textual artifact (if not yet called that), which was new not only for *Nick* in particular, but for outmoded melodrama in general. As a *document*, a script belonged in a library, especially those divisions or whole institutions oriented toward research. Copies that had spent their exchange value in book markets or their use value backstage moved into these specialized preservation locations. For old drama as for other subjects, the site, or situation, affects the flow

⁵⁵⁷ For a 1930s survey of available titles and types of play publications, see Milton Smith, *Guide to Play Selection* (New York: National Council of Teachers of English/Appleton-Century, 1934).

⁵⁵⁸ Harry M. Lyndenberg, quoted in Evelyn Hisz, “History of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center,” MS Thesis, Long Island University (NY), 1969, 8; *Report of the New York Public Library for 1925* (New York: New York Public Library, 1926), 75.

⁵⁵⁹ Bird, *A City Looking Glass; A New York Comedy*, ed. Arthur H. Quinn (New York: Colophon, 1938); Boker, *Nydia, a Tragic Play*, ed. Edward S. Bradley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929).

of knowledge.⁵⁶⁰ In the UK, the copies of *Nick* were long conserved as part of government records, after which these antique files were relocated through “byzantine complexity” to other state-run cultural auspices, the British Museum and finally the British Library (for the post-1824 files, while pre-1824 files were purchased by the Huntington Library in California).⁵⁶¹ The British play archive has been well studied in relation to censorship, single works, and the function of archives for theatre research, addressed in a special issue of a theatre studies journal.⁵⁶² Apart from that state collection, there were other movements of old drama into English-language libraries abroad, though my research about *Nick* is more elaborate for US cases.⁵⁶³

In the US, through many of these passages the playbook assumed yet another value, as a *gift*, through the distinct passage of formal donation. In anthropology, the gift had long been analyzed for its qualities of linking a gesture to a material thing in an act that expresses or rehearses social relationships and maintains community. Under structuralism, the gift characterized an entire system contrasted against market economies by tidy binaries of relationships (close or distant), appreciation (worth or monetary value), and permanence (inalienable or alienable). Post-structural anthropologists argue instead that the gift mode comingles with financial exchange in complex ways, especially in the biographies of things that disentangle the transmutation of an object’s significance, finding that “things may come to embody the values of community, be used to emphasize authority, underscore equality between

⁵⁶⁰ Adi Ophir and Steven Shapin, “The Place of Knowledge: a Methodological Survey” *Science in Context* 4, no. 1 (1991): 3-21, Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard, doi: 10.1017/S0269889700000132. Although focused on science, the article reviews theories of knowledge and space, or situatedness.

⁵⁶¹ Kathryn Johnson, "Gems from the Lord Chamberlains Coal Cellars? An Informal Account of the Genesis, Progress and Results of the Buried Treasures Project," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 36, no. 2 (2009): 2-5.

⁵⁶² *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2009). See also David Thomas, David Carlton and Anne Etienne, *Theatre Censorship From Walpole to Wilson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007).

⁵⁶³ Outside the British Library, about six institution catalogues in Great Britain, Ireland, and Australia list Medina’s *Nick*, almost all in the Dicks edition.

exchange partners, or express economic or market values.”⁵⁶⁴ Sociological theories or ethnographies of gifts (as far as I know) deal less with textual objects or institutional donations, and they have tended to analyze contemporaneous and ritual acts of gift-giving, so I am loosely translating those concepts to recognize how *Nick’s* historical passages as gifts emanate some features of community (in various senses) and bespeak a growing cultural pattern, if not precisely a ritual, of donating books to organizations. Starting around the mid-1870s, *Nick* was donated to a collection in almost every decade: the Boston Public Library (1873); Brown University (1880); the New York Public Library (1906); Columbia University (1911); Harvard University (1919); Amherst College (1920); Princeton University (1936); Yale University (1939); Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio (1941),⁵⁶⁵ and Miami University, Florida (1950s), with others to Harvard and Yale later (1990s). Without attempting to cover all or explain the regularity of these episodes, here I describe a few to suggest tendencies as well as variations of the routes of old plays into, and within, modern libraries.

The New York Public Library

In 1906 the New York Public Library received “its first important gift of theatrical material,”⁵⁶⁶ a bequest of thousands of playscripts from the late actor George Becks, an influx that laid the basis for its theatre collection, and which included two copies of Medina’s *Nick of the Woods*. A British émigré, Becks expressed an archival vision, a sense that workday scripts could be *documents* of a history both personal and general in his written offer of “my prompt

⁵⁶⁴ Asfke Komter, “Heirlooms, Nikes and Bribes: Toward a Sociology of Things,” *Sociology* 35, no. 1 (February 2001): 59-75, Web of Science, doi: 10.1177/0038038501035001005. Komter synthesizes the developments of conceptualizing gifts.

⁵⁶⁵ Librarian, Genealogy and Local History Dept., Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, email message to author, February 3, 2010. The H.P.S.O. became the Cincinnati Historical Society Library.

⁵⁶⁶ Hisz, “The History of the Theatre Collection,” 4.

books, the traditions of the stage and labour of my life.”⁵⁶⁷ This auto-historic impulse was unusual for theatre workers, who rarely donated, willed, or sold their collections directly to institutions; rather, their materials were usually donated by others or purchased through dealers and auctions, if anyone bothered to preserve theatre’s workaday documents. (In the nineteenth century, gentleman collectors of ephemera defined the category as “anything a library would not accept as a gift.”)⁵⁶⁸ When scripts were donated, the gifts were more often tendered by non-theatre professional men of higher status, who were often associated with the book world—members of the gentlemanly, literate culture from which the bequest, as a mode of transfer of property, emerged.⁵⁶⁹

Although its thousands of promptbooks helped constitute the New York Public Library’s theatre collection, the Becks bequest was not maintained as a physical or nominal unit. (In contrast, after a private collection of American imprints passed through three alumni of Brown University, it ended up in the college as the Harris-Anthony collection, where it was allotted a special room.)⁵⁷⁰ Nor was the Becks provenance indicated by notations on the playscripts; the assemblage was solely conceptual, or genealogical, iterated in separate lists and noted on catalogue cards only as an additional comment. As its theatre collection outgrew a few shelves in the general reference section, the New York Public Library demarcated a separate theatre *department* overseen by a specialized librarian (1931), and then allotted a section of the reading room for theater practitioners, which was later elevated to a *division* inside the same building

⁵⁶⁷ George Becks, preface to *Catalogue of the Becks Collection of Prompt Books in the New York Public Library*, (New York: New York Public Library, 1906), ii, New York Public Library.

⁵⁶⁸ Michael P. Harris, “Printed Ephemera,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, ed. Michael Felix Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 128.

⁵⁶⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary* on line, s.v. bequest. As the first instance of the noun *bequest*, the OED cites a 1496 reference to William Caxton, the purported first English printer (though the verb appeared earlier).

⁵⁷⁰ Brown University Library, “The History of Special Collections at Brown University,” accessed March 15, 2010, Brown University Library, <http://library.brown.edu/about/hay/history>. Initiated by Hon. Albert G. Greene, the set passed to Clyde F. Harris (who printed an index), and then Henry B. Anthony, who donated it to the college.

(1945). The specialized branching of theatre libraries was neither ubiquitous nor unique, but sizable enough that librarians felt compelled to compile research directories, and even separate guides for just promptbooks. The New York theatre collection grew, without the emphatic specializations that define the Folger Library (Shakespeare) or the University of Texas Ransom collection (modernist literature). By undocumented means, the New York Public Library acquired a third copy of Medina's *Nick*, one of Haines's *Nick*, and the 1940 parody by Tom Taggart. In 1965 the NYPL erected a theatre library amid the elaborate Lincoln Center of the Performing Arts, a mile north of the Forty-Second street headquarters.⁵⁷¹ On founding Lincoln Center, the library split its holdings: one Medina *Nick*, Haines's, and the 1940 amateur version stayed in the central library, while the Becks promptbook migrated to the theatre division and eventually to its special collections section. Some pieces were microfilmed and some, including the Becks bequest catalogue itself, were later relocated off-site to distant, deeper storage. From a researcher's perspective, the result is that the copies appear differently—bound in a volume or single, just a pamphlet or a protective case—and the sites of encounter differ—sometimes monitored by librarians in a smaller quarter of a special collections division, and sometimes unsupervised in the general reading room, and of course subject to regulations about photocopies or photography, all qualities that color the status and significance of an old playscript.

Working Man's Institute

A *Nick* donation from a theatre family to the Working Man's Institute in Indiana marks an exceptional episode in the tendencies of old script gifts. Of the regionally prominent theatre family, the Goldens, the actress Bella Golden had headlined in the role of Telie, and among the few donations rendered by theatre practitioners, she seems unusual for having been Midwestern

⁵⁷¹ Hisz "History of the Theatre Collection"; John E. Van Tiem, "The Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library," typescript MA Thesis, Western Reserve University, 1957, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

and a woman (besides having also been Jewish). Most *Nick* copies came from men's libraries, and of rare or special playbook collections, few are identified with nineteenth-century women. The Golden family had toured smaller circuits in Midwest, a small radius that enabled them to maintain a collection at home, whereas the wider circuits of the nomadic Joseph Proctor perhaps constrained his accumulation and preservation of a sizable library. Bella Golden offered her family papers to the only library in their steady home-base, Harmony, Indiana,⁵⁷² an arrangement distinct among play donations for having been local, near the stage tour, and outside a major city. The donor-recipient affiliation was that of neighbors, an affinity of a proximate community, different from the affinity of the imagined community of college alumni or the professional bond between faculty and their employing schools. The Golden's chosen venue, too, is remarkable. The Working Man's Institute was typical of the industrial era mercantile library, founded by a philanthropist to advance the learning of (and avoid rebellion by) manual laborers.⁵⁷³ But it was not typical of *drama* in libraries: aiming for edification and uplift, mercantile libraries often eschewed popular readings.⁵⁷⁴

A few other donors were professional theatre artists who had worked in the late nineteenth-century; while the total is hardly statistically significant, it is culturally significant, because the convention of donating one's relics had long been confined to the social elites. Celebrity actor collections were coveted, as evidenced in the posthumous processing of David

⁵⁷² Librarian, Working Man's Institute, Harmony, Indiana, telephone conversation with author, January, 19, 2010.

⁵⁷³ For a succinct account, see Kenneth E. Carpenter, "Libraries," in *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*, ed. Mary K. Cayton and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001), 3: 369-378. Dale Carnegie explicitly recommended philanthropy for libraries as a means to avert class conflict.

⁵⁷⁴ Augst Thomas, "The Business of Reading in Nineteenth-Century America: The New York Mercantile Library," *American Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (June 1998), 267-305. The Harmony Working Man's Institute has since evolved into a semi-private, semi-community library, with no special theatre emphasis outside the Golden Family papers.

Garrick's library and Augustine Daly's impressive estate,⁵⁷⁵ but the properties of mid-level actors and operatives were less likely to encounter auctions and archives. Not anyone is archive-able, at any moment. If Joseph Proctor did assemble a library, it disappeared, even though his widow lived to 1911. Most theatre-based donations of *Nick* were mediated, not direct from a theatre worker, but rendered as gifts by the owner's decedents: the grandson of a theatre proprietor donated to Harvard University (Nathan Appell Papers); a daughter donated her actor father's library to a Cincinnati institution (the Alvin A. Read memorial collection); the son-in-law of a Boston prompter gave his playbooks to Princeton University (Playbooks Collection); and a second-generation professor donated his father's collection to his employer (Miami University). Several donors had been involved with *amateur* theatre, yet they donated in the capacity of alumni of prestigious schools or members of the well-to-do class—as did the philanthropist businessman Evert Jansen Wendell, the theatre-hobbyist who gave one *Nick* to Harvard University.⁵⁷⁶

Although most copies of *Nick* were given to large institutions, two copies were donated to Amherst College. Both donors were alumni, and each ran a publishing company. These two features—alumni giving and the book-world profession—recurred across several instances of *Nick*'s migration to libraries. One *Nick* came from the textbook publisher George A. Plimpton, who, having been graduated from the men's college at the end of the Civil War and chaired its Board at the turn of the century, gave hundreds of bound plays at some unrecorded date (though his more prestigious rare books collection went to Columbia University).⁵⁷⁷ *Nick* was associated

⁵⁷⁵ On the Garrick estate, see David Pearson, *Provenance Research in Book History: A Handbook* (London: British Library, 1994), 137; the estate of Daly, the "princely collector," noted in *Athenaeum*, March 24, 1900, 371, British Periodicals, ProQuest.

⁵⁷⁶ "In Memory of Evert J. Wendell," *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* 25, no. 26 (1923; repr. Boston: Harvard Bulletin, 1924), 779-81, accessed October 8, 2009, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

⁵⁷⁷ Michael Kelly, email; finding aid, George A. Plimpton Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library Collections, Columbia University, http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd_4079576.

with his role as book collector and alumnus rather than his position as publisher; his firm, Ginn and Company, did issue one-act plays for schools and books about theatre, but not old melodrama. The other came from the class of 1934 graduate Morris Abbot Van Nostrand, who, while chief executive officer of Samuel French from the 1950s to the 1980s, designated his alma mater as a depository, a gift in perpetuity of every company publication for Amherst.⁵⁷⁸ Amherst's rare books division has no other specialization in theatre, and nor does the surrounding region of western Massachusetts figure significantly in the geography of nineteenth-century American theatre. The donations were propelled instead by the traditional relationship between alumni and private colleges, part of the emotional, material and symbolic circulations—the multiple economies—that help define the affluent social stratum.

Book Markets and Libraries

Donors involved in books, in contrast to their theatre counterparts, spanned all eras of *Nick*'s entry to libraries up to the 1990s. The book market intersects with libraries and universities in multiple ways, and that market involves more than just publishers and their customers. Plays moved across transactions in second-hand and rare (or antiquarian) book markets, through the main agents of private collectors, book dealers, and auction houses. This network was comprised of pathways largely unrelated to theatre, and overlapping but separate from book publishers; hence it unfolded across a distinct timeline. Such collectors and dealers, according to the bibliographer G. Thomas Tanselle, should be considered scholars⁵⁷⁹—many researched and wrote about the histories of their goods. According to Madeleine Stern, one of the hybrid practitioner-scholars (a book dealer who writes about books and the book trade itself), the

⁵⁷⁸ Michael Kelly, Head of Archives and Special Collections, Frost Library, Amherst College, email message to author, January 15, 2010.

⁵⁷⁹ Tanselle, *Rationale of Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1989), 45.

professional rare books system did not gel until 1940 in the US.⁵⁸⁰ As book historian David McKitterick explains for the English traders, “it took an extraordinarily long time for the world of old books to organize itself sufficiently to bring professional and bibliophile interests together.”⁵⁸¹ Used book sellers required little capital, could deal alongside another job, operated from modest sites (small stalls or street barrows), and could earn well by peddling facsimile antiques, conditions that forestalled systematizing. Second-hand markets also generated their own genres of texts, including provenance records and book lists.⁵⁸² The rare book passages left better records than ordinary library acquisitions or bookstore exchanges, though still only irregularly before 1940 in the US, and less regularly still for unprestigious works.

Rarely did dealer transactions transform the material playscripts themselves, unlike book or music stores, which sometimes left trademark stickers on their goods.⁵⁸³ The book dealer mediated the flow of playscripts as what Stern calls an “intermediary ghost.”⁵⁸⁴ (The George Washington Harby promptbook does still bear the pencil note, *Commission \$650*, presumably representing the price Clifton Barrett paid to bring it into the Robert M. Bird sub-set of his American Literature collection, which ended up in the University of Virginia.) One Chicago *Nick* specimen embodies the trajectory of collector, dealer, and learning institution: a promptbook of *Nick* (from a Spencer edition) was acquired by the late nineteenth-century collector W. W. Nisbet, who sold it to another collector, Snyder, from whose family it was acquired by a Chicago dealer, from whom it was purchased by the University of Northern Illinois, forming the Nisbet-

⁵⁸⁰ Madeleine Stern, *Antiquarian Bookselling in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), vii.

⁵⁸¹ McKitterick, “Second-Hand and Old Books,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4, 1830-1914, ed. David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 670. 635-673

⁵⁸² McKitterick, “Second-Hand,” in *Cambridge History of the Book*, 635-673. McKitterick’s account of the market during 1810s to 1910s names several of these genres and their links to bibliography.

⁵⁸³ One Medina *Nick* specimen in the Nineteenth Century Playbooks Collection at Princeton University Library bears the stamp of “Burton & Co., 92 Fourth Ave NY.”

⁵⁸⁴ Stern, *Antiquarian Bookselling*, vii.

Snyder collection.⁵⁸⁵ After an eight-decade unfolding, the successive collectors, not the middle-man dealer, are remembered in the name of the collection. The *Nick* in Chicago's Newberry Library bears no sign of provenance itself, though notes on "booklists" identify it as an item purchased for one dollar in 1933, as one piece in one man's small set of sundry literary works.⁵⁸⁶

The University of Chicago

Not all script transfers were donations, as other Chicago copies illustrate. In the 1920s, the University of Chicago acquired two copies: one for course reading for an English class and another purchased by the library as part of a large drama collection. The fact that *Nick* was assigned for college homework seems remarkably aberrant, in an era characterized by debates more about how to analyze Shakespeare and why to study Melville than about redeeming features of melodrama. The details of that English course are lost, though the playbook was preserved, and its subsequent small-scale, intramural movements were typical of books in growing institutions: it was initially held on reserve inside the English department, when each department housed its own readings; in the 1950s, these respective departmental libraries were routed to either general stacks or a Rare Books division; and finally general and rare holdings were adjoined in one central library in the 1970s. At one of those junctures, this textbook *Nick* transmogrified into a rare book.⁵⁸⁷

The route of its sister copy is similarly only half clear, and also different from donations. In 1910s New York, Fred Atkinson, President of Brooklyn Polytechnic College (later absorbed in the City University of New York), collected American plays, when collecting outmoded plays

⁵⁸⁵ Nisbet-Snyder Drama Collection website, Northern Illinois University Library, DeKalb (IL), <http://www.ulib.niu.edu/rarebooks/index.cfm>; Lynne Thomas, Librarian, Northern Illinois University Library, email message to author, February 3, 2010.

⁵⁸⁶ Autumn L. Mather, Reference Librarian, Newberry Library, email to author, January 26, 2012.

⁵⁸⁷ Julia Gardner, Reference and Instruction Librarian, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, email message to author, January 21, 2010.

was hardly common. Besides the dealer, the collector is another figure in the lives of playscripts, a station between theatres or publishers and institutions. Noting that plays were rarely “preserved in family libraries,” Atkinson described his travails to amass his own American drama set, by visiting second-hand bookshops along the East Coast and in London, purchasing a large set in 1912.⁵⁸⁸ Outmoded drama was worth preserving—if not for literary quality, he stressed, then for literary history and social history, a view that foreshadowed the ethos of American Studies and Cultural Studies decades later.⁵⁸⁹ Atkinson, as professor and collector, embodied the links between the book trade and learning institutions: he purportedly consulted specialists in universities and other libraries, and corresponded with rare book dealers.⁵⁹⁰ As book handling generated other documents, his collection engendered a typewritten inventory (of the pre-1830 section), a list interlaced with conversational notes and pleas for information about certain titles, which circulated as a bibliography; that typescript informed later printed bibliographies which informed others, down the chain of drama reference texts.⁵⁹¹ In 1925, Atkinson sold his collection, which traveled, perhaps through a middle-man dealer, to the University of Chicago, although it remains unclear when the collection expanded to the post-1830 section that enveloped Medina’s *Nick of the Woods*.

Landing in a library did not bring the script to total stasis; it eddied in the institution’s transformations of space and organization. *Nick* illustrates the smaller movements of playscripts *within* an institution, in the era when institutions of learning were growing robustly, as the stories of the New York Public Library and the University of Chicago demonstrate. Playscripts

⁵⁸⁸ Fred Atkinson, *American Drama in The Atkinson Collection*, Typescript Photostat (New York?: 1918), New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

⁵⁸⁹ Atkinson, *American Drama*, ii.

⁵⁹⁰ Atkinson, *American Drama*, i.

⁵⁹¹ Frank Pierce Hill, *American Plays Printed 1714-1830; a Bibliographical Record* (1934; repr. New York: B. Franklin, 1970), v. Hill acknowledges Atkinson’s bibliography.

frequently underwent such relocations and re-designations as these institutions enlarged and re-arranged their holdings. Scripts' pathways, in other words, trace the changes inside one institution, and by extension, signal transformations in the learning arena at large.

Brander Matthews and the Columbia Theatre Museum

Brander Matthews, an affluent New Yorker born before Medina's *Nick* was published, attended Columbia University and then joined its faculty, becoming the first official drama professor in the United States. As a collector, he amassed his own "Dramatic Museum," an array of playscripts as well as other documents and objects (such as masks and theatre models).⁵⁹² At some unknown point, the Museum came to include a re-bound copy of *Nick*. The Theatre Museum, along with Matthews's writings in general periodicals and scholarly books, framed *theatre* as valuable artistically and intellectually—worthy of formal study. Matthews departed from the prevalent philological trends by insisting on the *theatrical* dimension of drama, even in its vulgar depths, insisting that "dramatic literature is inextricably associated with the show business."⁵⁹³ He wrote a few plays and interacted with amateur theatre outside of school. In his historiography, Matthews cast theatre as a worldwide and perpetual phenomenon, expressing a proto-anthropology of theatre that linked ancient ritual, contemporary commercial theatre, and non-Western drama, a view that later became standard in Theatre Studies. In this vein, he enfolded old, popular melodrama into the story of American drama—seeing it as possibly *more* proper to American traditions than was experimental modernism. That view butted against the ethos of his counterpart at Harvard University, Branson Howard, Eugene O'Neill's mentor and proponent of non-commercial little theatre. Matthews's nationalist populism slanted toward social *conservatism*—not socialism—colored by a concern for a domestic theatre tradition in

⁵⁹² Jean Ashton, introduction to *The Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum at Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University, 2005), 9-11. Exhibit catalogue.

⁵⁹³ Matthews, *A Book about the Theatre* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1916), 9.

rejection of European cultural hegemony (an attitude that perpetuates the ethos of Bird's novel). At the same time, Matthews took a clear stance in the debates rifting college English departments, advocating a gentlemanly philology of a nationalist tenor (though rooted in Europe), against international-oriented "scientific" methods and professional missions.⁵⁹⁴

This material, catholic, historical ethos was manifest in, and advocated through, his eclectic Theatre Museum collection, which he gave to the University in 1911.⁵⁹⁵ In the first phase, Columbia kept the Museum integrated yet outside the library, under the auspices of the English department; two decades later it was absorbed into the central library, still maintained as a set; thirty years later it was disunited; and in the 1990s—approaching the end of my account of *Nick's* life—the collection was relocated to the Rare Books division. As in many other institutions, the Columbia library houses multiple copies of *Nick*, not only the Museum copy, but another shelved among circulating books, while microfiche reproductions are encased in drawers in a suite dedicated to microform. The same play-text is mediated very differently by procedures of access and material enveloping, according to its location in conceptual systems and institutional space.

Archive Theory

The tracks of Medina's plays highlight the untidy, mutable boundaries of book holdings in institutions. An ordinary copy, stored on accessible shelves, transmogrified into a *rare* or *special* item, stored out of sight. Scripts are not essentially *special* or *rare*, but designated and placed so by social and material arrangements: sometimes before the institutional acquisition, sometimes at the threshold, and sometimes later under reconfigured policies. As in Columbia University, in the University of Virginia, one copy of *Nick* remains in regular stacks (bound in

⁵⁹⁴ On Matthews and English discipline disputes, see Graff, *Professing Literature*, 72.

⁵⁹⁵ Ashton, introduction to *The Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum*, 9.

volumes) while another copy—perhaps even more hardy than the accessible one—is cloistered in Special Collections. The meaning and implications of the categories *rare*, or *collection*, are “complex, uncertain and changing,”⁵⁹⁶ qualities evident in the uneven passages of *Nick* in institutions. The concept of preserve-able documents, and the ways by which they get handled, are subject to other protocols and contingencies of these institutions, influenced by larger conceptions of theatre or literature (or other subjects).

In later phases, *Nick of the Woods* entered directly into Special Collections, an institutional section more often called Rare Books outside the US, which, though conflated with archives in writings by non-librarians, becomes a distinct realm in the terminology of preservation practitioners.⁵⁹⁷ In this lexicon, collections of uncommon material—such as those including old melodrama scripts—can take one of several forms: archive, personal papers, rare books, special collections, and in some instances museums. The distinction matters at several levels. *Archive* is theorized and invoked more than these others bodies in humanities and social science scholarship, yet the majority of preserved playscripts end up in Special Collections. These separate kinds of sites and processes have their respective histories that engender varying interactions with the overall history of material playscripts and also with academic work, money, and other variables relevant here. The archive has been explained as an outgrowth of large-scale social power, especially given the tradition of royal, secretive files. The scholarly type of archive can be seen as a modern turn in this continuity,⁵⁹⁸ and the Lord Chamberlain play license files do belong on this stratum. The archive has been explained critically for its function not only of state control of knowledge, but as the historian’s presumption of empirical truth, attributed to the

⁵⁹⁶ Daniel Traister, “Rare Book Libraries,” *International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science*, ed. John Feather and R. P. Sturges (New York: Routledge, 2003), 387.

⁵⁹⁷ Traister, “Rare Book Libraries,” 387-393.

⁵⁹⁸ Thomas Osborn, “The Ordinarity of the Archive,” *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (May, 1999): 51-64, Sage, doi: 10.1177/09526959922120243.

research model of the historian Leopold von Ranke. More than just faulty epistemological presumption, the archive determines categories of thinking and knowledge. But the term *archive* unfurls a range of varied nuances in recent scholarship. More metaphorically, *archive* refers to totalizing *ambitions* in the arenas of culture and knowledge, with or without bookshelves and filedrawers.⁵⁹⁹ Yet other writers extend it, or appropriate it, from hegemonic instances of the state to a positive connotation, proffered by humanities scholars (as well as artists) to signify sometimes collective memory, often of disenfranchised social groups, or sometimes lasting traces of ephemeral performances.⁶⁰⁰ The term has been wielded as a euphemism for a scholar's own set of sources, too (a reach provoking the cynical view that *archive* is sometimes used for its “capital,” or hefty evocation, rather than to elucidate social practices). These abstracted or metaphoric extensions of the term circumvent the literal archive—the site, worker culture, patron practices, and its materiality (“snakes,” controlled temperatures, and gloves)—and hence have not elucidated the lives of documents or our processes of scholarship in their concrete social-material unfoldings.

As a distinct phenomenon, Special Collections has not attracted interdisciplinary scholarship or metaphorizing, but it is discussed, in a literal sense, in studies of libraries and information. Unlike the archive, the Special Collection is a development that originated in, and has been more elaborated in, the United States.⁶⁰¹ After the advent of Rare Book divisions—which were influenced by rare books commerce—Special Collections emerged out of practices of academic research, particularly the German model requiring scholarship standards and peer

⁵⁹⁹ This concept of archive is drawn from specialists not of library history, but of post-structural theory, foremost two works: Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). Foucault does inform my thinking about libraries' conceptual categories.

⁶⁰⁰ E.g., Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁶⁰¹ William L. Joyce, “Special Collections,” *Encyclopedia of Library History*, ed. Wayne A. Wiegand and Donald G. Davis, (New York: Garland Press, 1994), 595-597.

review.⁶⁰² After the 1920s decade of great expansion for all campus special collections, in the 1930s Special Collections acquired what a library historian calls a “connotation of rarity and value”— not only economic or scarcity value, but “research value.”⁶⁰³ (Around that time, the widow of a Yale alumnus established a fund with which to buy American literature, a scope that for some reason came to include an early edition of Medina’s *Nick*.)⁶⁰⁴ The bibliographer Nicolas Barker makes the point in economic terms: copies become “rare books” not necessarily because they are numerically rare, but because they bear distinct “commodity value.”⁶⁰⁵ The “special” designation perhaps derives less directly from exchange value, though, and more from symbolic, especially intellectual value, that is, from constructing a grouping according to criteria pertinent to contemporary research. Those groupings, influenced by studies in material things from history, anthropology, and the museum profession, often intermixed documents and objects, as happened in the Brander Matthews museum. (Especially in public displays that juxtapose scripts and non-textual artifacts, such as costumes and props, these assemblages highlight the thingness of playscripts, one of the dimensions of its manifold identity.)

According to a stricter, practitioner definition, *archive* denotes the set of documents amassed by an organization in the course of its operations—an accumulation of the workaday. The lexicon of librarians differs, often drastically, from terms used in post-structural scholarship, yet arguably the workers’ own nomenclature should be woven into analyses. The Folger Library’s holding of the Bowery Theatre account-books are a partial archive in this sense (however far from the founding oil magnate’s vision of Shakespeare folios that may seem). This

⁶⁰² Oleson and Voss, “The Organization of Knowledge,” 15-16.

⁶⁰³ Megan Barnard, introduction to *Collecting the Imagination: The First Fifty Years of the Ransom Center* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 5; Joyce, “Special Collections,” 597.

⁶⁰⁴ Susan Brady, Librarian, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, email to author, February 15, 2010.

⁶⁰⁵ Barker, “Libraries and the Mind of Man,” in *Potencie of Life*, 37.

attention to the mundane defines the archive's modern, public (or democratic) essence, for researchers.⁶⁰⁶ Are playscripts part of a theatre's archive? The Becks bequest could be seen as a partial archive, in that he acquired them through his work. In most trajectories of *Nick*, though, playscripts usually have been routed to regular stacks, special collections, rare books, or manuscripts collections—not to archives. Some scripts remain in the set called “personal papers,” especially those of an author, alongside correspondence and contracts (as is arguably the case for Medina's *Nick* playbook belonging to the Robert M. Bird papers in the University of Pennsylvania). When recognized as a valuable specimen, a playscript lands in Rare Books or Special Collections or Manuscripts, which are sometimes combined. The University of Chicago now keeps *all* its Medina plays in Rare Books and Special Collections; the British Library keeps printed *Nick* in Rare Books, relegating the three anonymous Lord Chamberlain submissions to Manuscripts, one flight upstairs. The historian of printing David McKitterick decried this fundamental sundering of manuscript from printed book imposed by libraries;⁶⁰⁷ there are yet other dividing lines, besides the hand/print division, that color the identity of a document.

The British Lord Chamberlain Play Collection is an instance of plays in an archive designed, propelled, and maintained by the state, with the implications of policing by censorship and regulating access. (One theatre scholar invokes the collection as a warning about the deep mediation of archives in general.)⁶⁰⁸ In the United States, the state did bolster theatre collections by dispatching Works Progress Administration workers to assist in cataloguing,⁶⁰⁹ but governmental effects are distant from *Nick*'s particular trajectory. The Library of Congress

⁶⁰⁶ Osborn, “The Ordinarity of the Archive.”

⁶⁰⁷ David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order 1450-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁶⁰⁸ Helen Freshwater, “The Allure of the Archives,” *Poetics Today* 24, no. 4 (Winter, 2003), 729-758.

⁶⁰⁹ For mention of WPA workers in a theatre division, see Van Tiem, “Theatre Collection,” 14-16; and Gilder, acknowledgement in *Theatre Collections*, 9. On WPA theatre lists, see note 628 below.

catalogues only the 1940 parody of *Nick*, and the national museum, the Smithsonian Institute, acquired it only as a peculiar appendage to their 1960s main purchase of a collection amassed by former book-scout Isidore Warshaw, whose centerpiece was beer-bottle labels and other business ephemera.⁶¹⁰

If the nation does figure in the playscripts' routes to collections, it is more as *theme* than as agent. The cultural concept "American" routed *Nick* to some specialized collections: both the 1880s alumni gift to Brown University and the Clifton Waller Barrett collection at the University of Virginia were collections of American published literature. (The latter included an unpublished manuscript of Harby's version because of its association with the Robert Montgomery Bird collection, a sub-set in the whole.)⁶¹¹ Although there are other variables at work in preservation—notably in distinctions between literature, drama, and theatre—the national-historical framework looms more largely. In other words, because the play was recognized as performed in, written in, or published in the United States, it was worth collecting and hence belonged under that rubric (at least in the United States). Region, too, emerged as a classification, as Kentucky—the play's fictional setting—made *Nick* relevant to some Southern or Kentucky-specific efforts, as becomes more apparent in the microform projects described in chapter seven. In contrast, *Nick* was never collected for having been written by a woman, as it might have been in the quirky, important Gerritson Collection; nor for being a dramatized play or a Bowery Theatre production—to name a few feasible identities. Although Chicago's Newberry Library houses both a copy of *Nick* and a prominent native American collection, the play is not a

⁶¹⁰ Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Advertising, Marketing, and Commercial Imagery Collections, Smithsonian Institute, accessed Oct. 28, 2008, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/warshaw/plays.htm>. The website does not explain the relation of printed plays to beer labels, informing us instead that "the art of performing has been part of human existence for countless ages."

⁶¹¹ Robert Montgomery Bird Collection, Clifton Waller Barrett American Literature Collection, Small Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

part of that thematic set.⁶¹² Any one of the play's multiple identities might become legible, and desirable, to a collector, whether individual or institutional; those that do emerge reflect the prevailing registers of value, and shape conceptions of the play.

Library Transformations

Libraries transformed a playscript materially. In Columbia University, the circulating copy of *Nick* is firmly bound and pasted with a check-out pocket (date-stamped a few times in the 1990s), while copy in the Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum seems yet more modified: the collection cut away the pages related to publisher commerce (advertisements and catalogue), cropped off the bottom edge of pages, and also replaced flimsy wrappers with a firm cover. Most notably, the copy bears a bookplate glued on the end page, illustrated with a striking allegorical drawing by the contemporaneous artist Edwin Austin Abbey: it depicts a Native American man, wearing loin-skirt and feathered head-dress, who examines a classic Greek tragic mask he holds before him, as he kneels alone on an empty plain.⁶¹³ This was the first image of an Indian to approach the text of *Nick*—the only publisher's illustration had shown Telie and Roland—but he approaches only coincidentally. The picture was designed as a logo to unify the printed booklets belonging to the Museum. While the drawing style is modernist allegory, the Indian figure identifies the collection as *American*, yet with (imaginary) links to European cultural heritage, back to Attic theatre. US melodrama belongs in that continuum.

Though library processing does not involve a new *medium* as do other episodes described in this study, it elaborates *mediation*—the organizational, material, cognitive arrangements that

⁶¹² Mather, Reference Librarian, email; Newberry (Chicago) Library Catalogue, accessed June 21, 2011, <http://www.newberry.org/catalogs-and-guides>. On the Edward E. Ayer Native American Collection, see Lawrence W. Towner, "The Recent Shaping of the Newberry Library's Collections" in A. N. L. Munby and Lawrence W. Towner, *Flow of Books and Manuscripts* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), chap. 2.

⁶¹³ *Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum*, 17. The exhibit catalogue reproduces the bookplate, which is also pasted into the rare book copy of *Nick*, though not on the one in regular stacks.

affect the visibility and accessibility of a particular copy of a play. The relocation, preservation, small transformations, and representation steer access to playscripts and shape knowledge about them. *Nick* was grouped and bound in a volume, often alongside other plays, but sometimes amid heterogeneous pamphlets; some bookplates even categorize the plays as *pamphlets*, though theatre workers and publishers never used the term.⁶¹⁴ Libraries embossed spines of volumes, as collectors often did. If kept single, the script's fragile paper wrapper was replaced by board binding, or encased in a thick card envelope, closed by string ties. The British Museum stamped its crown logo mid-page; on a Lord Chamberlain manuscript, the insignia appears alongside one of Roland's speeches—a symbol of the institution's *property*, not the state's censorship procedure. Librarian clerks jotted handwritten notes here and there, arcane organizational codes (call numbers and others), or mysterious date-stamps (of acquisition or cataloguing)—part of a library's own behind-scenes textual processes that seep into public view. (Binders, usually separate firms outside the library, sometimes left their own date-stamp on end pages.) These modulations bespeak the playscript's proper location amid an institutional collection and visually signal systematic bureaucratic procedures.

By locating scripts into special sections, and modifying their material form, libraries also transform the plays *conceptually*; they do not just preserve the prior meanings of the relic, but refract or add meaning, even if subtly. They shaped symbolic identity in the ways they represented the plays and playscripts in their own genres of documentation. The catalogue cards were launched by the Library of Congress at the start of the century⁶¹⁵ and widely distributed by

⁶¹⁴ The term *pamphlet* appears occasionally in book dealer and library catalogues to designate playbooks, but is never used in theatre references (despite etymological roots in a medieval play, *Pamphilus*). In Samuel French catalogues it indicates didactic brochure, e.g. the 1936 "Amateurs and the Royalty Question."

⁶¹⁵ Nicolas Barker, "The Catalogue and the Card," in *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book: Selected Essay* (London: British Library, 2003), 492-502.

them, or publishers; still they were not consistent.⁶¹⁶ Catalogue cards were produced by both menial physical labor and mental work (very often by women), guided by institutional policy and informed by prevalent norms of authorship, drama, and related concepts. The photographed facsimiles of single cards printed in the *National Union Catalogue pre-1856 Imprints*, as well as the New York Public Library's own catalogue volumes, display varied combinations of medium—hand, print, and typewriter—and varied format, most in mixed letter case but some all-capitals (since early typewriters printed only the upper case). There were heterogeneous practices in, for example, noting a play's absent date: N/D (no date); 18—; 186?; or 1860? When listings under one work were sequenced in chronological order, the typography actually affected historiography: 18— precedes 1860?, although the latter could easily have appeared before the former in actual events.⁶¹⁷

Librarians annotated authors' names, sometimes by consulting reference books—another intertextual layer of the representation of plays and playwrights. They fleshed out initials, so “L” sometimes was annotated to *Louisa* (though “H” was never expanded into her middle name Honore). Some injected “L. H. Medina” onto the title page of the revision by Tom Taggart, who buried her name deep in his explanatory prose. The Library of Congress, to unify oeuvres, titles, and authors, established the “Authority Record” for each category, an assigned proper name that overrides the disarray of variations; concretely, this enacted what Michel Foucault formulates as “author function,” the quest for order that contains variegation and delineates the boundaries of writer's identity and work.⁶¹⁸ This may have influenced an anthology editor who reprinted the play in 1976, as I explain in chapter seven. In this procedure, Louisa Medina became designated

⁶¹⁶ For the early history of the New York Public Library cards by a chief librarian, see Harry M. Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library: Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations* (New York: New York Public Library, 1923).

⁶¹⁷ *The National Union Catalogue Pre-1956 Imprints* (London: Mansell, 1968-1981), s.v. “Medina, Louisa.”

⁶¹⁸ Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141-160.

Louisa *Hamblin*, identified, that is, by the surname of her domestic partner, boss, and perhaps murderer, Thomas Hamblin. Though Medina and others had briefly used “Mrs. Hamblin,” they seemed to have wielded it tactically during publicized crises (accusations of murder). In play by-lines in periodicals, playbills, and playscripts, she was identified as Medina. This nominalization affected flows of information: the only anthology reprint of *Nick*, and the Harvard Theatre Collection’s card catalogue (still serviceable in the time of my research) both named her Hamblin. Without reproducing the material text, libraries participate in the representation of the playtext and the production of knowledge about it.

The *conceptual* classification systems supplanted the old arrangement of a *physical* location, a fixed spot on a shelf.⁶¹⁹ Classification incorporated several levels of information, starting from the “call number,” a sequence label that positions the item spatially as well as conceptually within a series of texts sharing its features: *American Literature; Drama; Medina*. They assigned subject heading phrases, often just *Drama—American*, inscribed somewhere on the early pages of the playscript as well as on the catalogue card. Subject headings branched into finer distinctions and came to refer not only to genre/nation, but to play content: *Frontier and Pioneer Life—Kentucky—Drama* or *Pioneer Life—US—Kentucky—Drama*. That label appears more for Taggart’s revision than Medina or Haines’s versions (even though his refers the least to old Kentucky). Subject headings forge multiple individual items into a *conceptual* set (though the pieces might be widely scattered). Cross-reference tags connect members from separate sets, as in *See Also, R. M. Bird*. Both supply conceptual maps that direct patrons to other texts sharing some feature—in a word, an *identity*. The labels rely on convention, or current categories; they are historical products. The reference tags resemble the rubrics of special collections or anthologies. These concepts are also manifested materially, listed on catalogue cards (before the

⁶¹⁹ Joyce, “Special Collections,” 596.

great migration to computer systems). As for Special Collections, in library catalogue systems none of the *Nick* plays are identified and grouped as, for example, *dramatizations*, or as representing Native American Indians, or as written by a women author—categories that could come to the fore in other moments.

Religious Reference

Outside libraries, other types of classifications emerged. In 1917, *Nick* was grouped under a religious rubric, when an international publishing house issued a Christian minister's book, *The Parish Theatre*, advocacy for local Protestant church recreational theatre.⁶²⁰ A version of *Nick* is listed in the appendix promised by the subtitle: *to which is added a descriptive list of one hundred choice plays suitable for the Parish Theatre*. The bulk of the book is not a how-to guide, but a Christian-themed history of world theatre, which finessed the problem of Christian anti-theatricality to champion community-based theatre sponsored by churches, against the polemical foil of modernist drama. Though recognizing that seeming oxymoron, Smith presents parish theatre as a “department” of amateur theatre or “people’s drama” that had unfolded in the United States since the 1880s.⁶²¹ While Brander Matthews and Fred Atkinson, among others, recognized the value of American theatre and popular theatre, Smith seems unusual for having advocated serious study not of old drama but of *amateur* practice, well before the formation of theatre studies. For Smith, amateur theatre was “original,” a respite from the excesses of Emile Zola’s naturalism, “sensationalism,” “the rather limited modern stage” and also the commercialism embodied by the Syndicate, the national theatre-chain monopoly (which was actually dissolving at that moment).⁶²²

⁶²⁰ John T. Smith, *The Parish Theatre* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1917), accessed November 9, 2008, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

⁶²¹ Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 4.

⁶²² Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 6.

For his play list, Smith culled from commercial publisher catalogues those hundred “choice” works commensurable with principles based in aesthetics and the nature of the parish as institution: the list is not intended for clubs or schools, nor, he specifies, for convents.⁶²³ *Nick*, with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, contributes to his set of serious recommendations, alongside lighter fare. In Reverend Smith’s credo, violence was not unwholesome: he recommends *Nick* with nine other Western plays “full of action, gun play, and fine scenery.”⁶²⁴ Though he finds the representation of Indians untroubling, when presenting the Pocahontas play *Indian Days*, Smith urges that “care should be given to avoid offense to sensitive Irish people,” who will likely object to “burlesquing” them in a character named McGuire (or in the eleven “Irish” plays elsewhere in the list).⁶²⁵ Satires of ambitious, modern, political women are also commended. His list and notations suggest a socially and aesthetically conservative, nationalist, anti-Catholic, patriarchal ethos that nonetheless welcomed fun-loving, do-it-yourself theatricality.

Smith’s listing of *Nick* contains other notable features. Mysteriously, he names *Nick* by an unfamiliar title, *Wahnaton*, presumably another edition that he identifies as “a modern version of the ancient *Nick of the Woods*,” but as with many publisher reprints, “this fact is not mentioned”⁶²⁶ on the playscript, or playlist, he handled. *Wahnaton* opens a new branch on *Nick*’s stemma, although like the 1880s Nevada version *Shanowakin*, the title evaporated from sight: perhaps it was wrought by a misspelling, or the script was an unpublished typescript for rent (another revenue stream for publishers and play brokers), or some publisher’s shenanigans by wrapping a false new cover on the old print play. Not even the World Wide Web locates a specimen titled *Wahnatan*, yet Smith’s appendix pointed parishioners to three publishers to

⁶²³ Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 47.

⁶²⁴ Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 48.

⁶²⁵ Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 83

⁶²⁶ Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 71.

purchase the listed plays. He may have recognized *Nick* beneath *Wahnaton* from having attended an able, professional production. Annotating *Nick/Wahnaton*, Smith echoes the glowing newspaper rhetoric of its stage career:

It is the most thrilling frontier play on record. The leading man plays all three parts, all separate, and unsuspected until the end. The siege of the blockhouse and stockade is capital. The characters are all high-colored, either very good or very vicious. The scenery required is most romantic.... In populous towns it should play for several nights.⁶²⁷

Despite his amateur advocacy, Smith maintains standards of production, sorting the easy projects from the technically challenging, which *Nick* is: “Only a first-class company should attempt it with a first-class director, and all the resources of both should be devoted to presenting it very well.”⁶²⁸ The play’s canoe adventures, and the ultimate fire, were prohibitive to low-budget infrastructure, and the broad-stroked characters difficult to enact convincingly (so long as the story was treated in earnest); hence *Nick* was often excluded from amateur lists, until it became subject to parody.

Though Reverend Smith’s publication may have done little for the life of *Nick* in its era, or for the serious study of amateur theatre, for our purposes it raises several themes. While the book’s religious rubric is unusual, there were other frameworks abounding amid a growing movement of non-commercial (or low-budget) theatre for a community. Drama Leagues assembled lists for the military, for instance, though in the opposite direction from *Parish Theatre*, these often eschewed old melodrama in favor of Modernism (Lady Gregory for soldiers). Newer, smaller play publishers targeted single niche markets, and larger firms delineated sub-sets, such as temperance or “Ethiopian” plays, in their catalogues. Second, the list was an appendage to a polemic essay, the genealogy and taxonomical explications of amateur and parish theatre. While this elaborate historical narrative is unusual in the genre of drama lists,

⁶²⁷ Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 83.

⁶²⁸ Smith, *Parish Theatre*, 86.

it reflects larger tendencies related to *history*: non-specialists scholars could still publish theatre history; and many lists conducted *implicit* historiography. Usually, large lists leapt from Restoration to Modernism, erasing melodrama. Like theatre practice, theatre historiography runs from professional to amateur, explicit to implicit, and across textual genres—including lists.

Nick Not Recommended

Recommendation play-lists proliferated in the early twentieth-century, generated in several spheres—commercial publishing, learning institutions, and amateur theatre. Librarians reported requests for help from theatre practitioners, as in this 1930s assertion:

Actor, designer, producer, critic, press agent, when once they discover that there is a knowledgeable friend within the gates, storm the portals of the library and museum and carry away treasures of information and inspiration for the problem of production in which they are engaged.⁶²⁹

(The theatre envoys who stormed these portals, though, left fewer traces of these interactions.)

Another “knowledgeable friend,” Ina Firkins, framed her *Index* as a response to frequent requests by patrons to locate and procure multiple copies of plays; though her scope covered 1800 to 1926, she omitted *Nick* (and her index listed no *frontier* theme, but instead current topics such as *drug habit*).⁶³⁰ Drama Leagues generated their own bibliographies, and the Federal Theatre Project, under the depression-era Works Progress Administration, issued dozens during its short run, while also compiling histories of American theatre and maintaining a card catalogue.⁶³¹ Drama experts, especially university faculty, compiled lists for secondary-school teachers, who were increasingly involved in theatre projects as drama was integrated in curricula. Inevitably, there came lists of lists, such as one assembled by a Cornell professor for an English teachers’

⁶²⁹ Gilder, *Theatre Collections*, 5.

⁶³⁰ Ina Ten Eyck Firkins, *Index to Plays, 1800-1926* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1927).

⁶³¹ Federal Theatre Project, Lists of Plays, mimeographs (New York: The National Service Bureau/Federal Theatre Project/ Works Progress Administration, 1938), New York Public Library Schomburg Center. The FTP collection includes of Negro, Jewish, and classic English plays, among others, compiled for the national network. For an account of the process, see the Library of Congress FTP archives, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fedtp/ftwpa.html>.

journal.⁶³² These selections reflected modern, non-commercial, Little Theatre, Drama League perspectives: values, titles, and styles circulated between university English literature scholars, Drama Leagues, Little Theatre, secondary school curricula, and libraries, all of whom were supplied by publishers (though these companies also served less erudite interests). None of the school-oriented lists included Medina's *Nick of the Woods*. They recommended other nineteenth-century plays (Gillette's *Secret Service*); a few other women playwrights (Anna Cora Mowatt); and older works from foreign cultures—Sanskrit drama, Spanish golden age plays, and dramatized Chinese tales. In this modern lens, US melodrama was hardly recognizable as viable drama. Other voices (or sometimes the other side of the same mouth) called hopefully for a national popular theatre, but even cultural nationalism did not champion *Nick of the Woods* in this arena.⁶³³

Play Lists

Lists of plays abounded across several interrelated fields, as the era saw an increase in *representation of, or reference to, playtexts*, especially in this enumerated form. The burgeoning, dovetailed disciplines of Library Science and Bibliography as well as the increase in the used/rare/antiquarian book trades (which produced auction records, provenance genealogies, and book trade compilations), supplied varying methods of organizing and listing plays.⁶³⁴

Commercial publishers' catalogues evolved apace, expanding their guiding annotations and paratexts. These references moved along separate paths and were not an integrated comprehensive network. Yet they also overlapped, as non-commercial lists for amateur or

⁶³² Alec M. Drummond, "For the Director of Dramatics," *The English Journal* 6, no.10 (December 1917): 658-663, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/801085>.

⁶³³ Garrett Leverton, "Production of Later Nineteenth Century American Drama," PhD diss., Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1936; Leverton, *Plays for the College Theatre* (New York: Samuel French, 1932). Leverton explicated old drama in the first work, yet omitted it from second.

⁶³⁴ Augusta I. Appleton, introduction to *The American Catalogue 1876-1884*, ed. Augusta I. Appleton *et al* (New York: C. C. Armstrong, 1910), v. This 1880s bibliography acknowledged the efforts to establish a "bibliographic system" in the United States. See also McKitterick on British book-world documents, n. 578 above.

educational theatre production indexed commercial publishers, for example. As utilitarian documents, lists undergo their own historical developments and steer physical access to and shape knowledge about texts.⁶³⁵ These reference documents contribute to *symbolic* production, in complex relationship to material and cultural productions; they legitimate registers of value (while positioning the list-maker as a legitimate expert). As a workaday means for scholarship, lists belong to a grey zone, the unnoticed, un-cited secondary source—what information science calls “meta data.”⁶³⁶ In this chapter I handle them both as primary and secondary sources, as I group together lists generated in separate fields and assembled according to varied qualities: for playbooks having been published and traded; for drama’s identity as literature (especially that of one nation); or a play’s having been staged, that is, for its position in theatre history (especially of one nation). As references were proliferating, *Nick* appeared in a few of these lists, or more accurately, *Nick* appeared *unevenly*.

For-Profit Play Lists

In commercial publishing, Samuel French listed *Nick* continuously from the inaugural catalogues into the 1910s. The catalogue, however, underwent changes and came in varied formats; as more single-play advertisements appeared in playbook end pages, the publisher relied on stand-alone, pamphlet style catalogues to proffer the a larger roster, and this in turn required the installation of meaningful sections and groupings. To guide amateurs especially, publishers classified not by literary or library groupings (*Drama—American*), but according to stage production parameters, separating long from short (*standard* or *minor*, respectively), and sometimes sequencing by price (“long five-dollar plays”). These transformations framed the same old playtext in new ways. In what the firm called “descriptive” catalogues, describing

⁶³⁵ Bill Katz, ed., *Cuneiform to Computer: A History of Reference Sources* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998).

⁶³⁶ *Dictionary of Information Science and Technology*, ed. Carolyn Waters (Boston: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1992), s.v. meta-data.

meant marking an entry with codes to identify sub-genre and to tally roles by sex, in order to help patrons shop for plays suitable to their preferences and casts. *Nick*'s cast changed from 14M/6 F in one 1880s listing to more male (sixteen) but fewer female roles (three) in 1902.⁶³⁷ The shift invites several explanations: the publisher refined the play's target niches (in this case, all-male or disproportionately male groups); the editors varied how they counted roles, such as "extra" settlers and Indians; or workers erred. For sub-genre, the code (c), before it signified copyright, indicated "powder piece," with powder a synecdoche for powdered hair or wig to signify historical, as it did in in the Samuel French 1902-3 entry for *Nick*. The catalogue redefined the play a "melodrama," using its shorthand "melo," after earlier catalogues and playbills had never used the term for Medina's version.⁶³⁸ (The company's more explicit catering to parodies of melodrama comes up in the next chapter.)

Samuel French also responded to the rise of school theatre in ways that, though they did not touch its presentation of *Nick*, highlight the interaction of publishers and educational institutions. Catalogues begin to mention *reading* plays, an activity delineated from staging in the company's fee schedule, which designated lower prices for those who sought "reading and reference" of "budget plays" than for those who staged plays, which, as a species of reproduction, entered the domain of intellectual property rights and so incurred fees.⁶³⁹ Aiming for school readers, Samuel French also issued a line of higher-quality booklets under the banner *Library Edition*, alongside a series named "Plays for Stage and Study," where study now meant academic analysis, not memorizing lines. Catalogues highlighted the faculty status of its editors and

⁶³⁷ Samuel French, *International Descriptive Catalogue of Plays and Dramatic Works* (New York/London: Samuel French, n.d., ca. 1880s), 15; Samuel French, *International Descriptive Catalogue 1902-1903* (Boston: Bakers, 1903), 22, both in Harvard Theatre Collection. (The latter's external printing may have been related to T. H. French's late 1902 death.)

⁶³⁸ French, *Descriptive Catalogue 1902-1903*, 22.

⁶³⁹ *1938 Supplement to Samuel French's Catalogue of Plays* (New York: Samuel French, 1938), 25, New York Public Library.

consultants, noting that the company hired the historian Margeret Mayorga as editor and the Columbia University PhD Garret Leverton as advisor to the “New educational service, to meet the changing conditions of widespread growth of drama activity in schools.”⁶⁴⁰ Marketing now invoked university productions⁶⁴¹ and education, as nineteenth-century catalogues had not.

Making Reference

Theatre lists emerged from other arenas outside of commercial play publishing, with more uneven representation of *Nick*. Reference texts in US theatre history usually had to reckon with melodrama, which remained a hallmark, positive or negative, in the lineages of national theatre. Most modern theatre scholarship, as Thomas Postlewait has argued, narrated the melodrama episode as a phase of decline from which Modernism ascended, or a foil against which Modernism triumphed—the *other* of modern theatre history.⁶⁴² In a 1968 review of nineteenth-century reprints, Gary Scrimgeour explained the landscape of the 1920s and 1930s: scholars were interested in drama written by caliber writers (as in the experiments by Henry James); discussion of theatre history ran at the level of gossip; and “nineteenth-century drama, because it was non-literary and anti-intellectual, had no place amongst the meditations of the classroom.”⁶⁴³ Working in Columbia University in the 1910s, Brander Matthews argued that melodrama merited “a more careful study,” though he wrote about literary drama; a generation later, Milton Smith, also writing in Columbia, omitted bathetic plays from his list for the

⁶⁴⁰ *1938 Supplement*, ii. Mayorga edited *Twenty Short Plays on a Royalty Holiday*. On Mayorga’s disparaging of *Nick*, see note 542, above; on Leverton’s mixed advocacy of melodrama, see note 630, above.

⁶⁴¹ *1930 Supplement to Samuel French’s Catalogue of Plays* (New York: Samuel French, 1930), 8, New York Public Library. Harry McGuire’s melodrama *Yella* was “first produced in the Department of Drama, Yale University.”

⁶⁴² Thomas Postlewait, “From Melodrama to Realism: the Suspect History of American Drama,” in *Melodrama: the Cultural Emergence of a Genre*, ed. Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (New York: St Martin’s 1996), chap. 3.

⁶⁴³ Scrimgeour, “Nineteenth-Century Drama (Review),” *Victorian Studies* 12, no. 1 (September 1968), 92. 91

National Council of Teachers of English.⁶⁴⁴ Scholars friendly to melodrama were outnumbered. Accordingly, *Nick* was omitted from reprint anthologies, even such likely vehicles as *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century* (since it had been a “favorite” US play), and even when *Nick* was present in some lists those anthologies drew from.⁶⁴⁵ Commissioned by the old US theatrical organization, the Dunlap Society, Robert Roden’s 1900 bibliography had included Medina, the “authoress of a number of sensational plays.”⁶⁴⁶

Another genre of list is the chronicle, whether stand-alone or appendix to historical narrative; for theatre these sequenced stage productions in chronological order, usually within the scope of a city or region. Theatre chronicles tended to name *Nick*, since they aimed to record theatre activity comprehensively, rather than to evaluate drama or explain historical developments, as had Mayorga. In his monumental, fifteen-volume reconstruction of New York productions, George C. D. Odell reproduced *Nick*’s cast lists, conveyed the spirit of the plot, and noted successive appearances in Manhattan and Brooklyn houses; the set was published by Columbia University, where after Odell died Brander Matthews edited his last volumes. Though ostensibly a matter-of-fact chronicle, Odell’s account is colored with evaluation, in the form of sardonic comment on the play’s (unfathomable) emotional appeal and longevity: at Proctor’s 1839 debut, “How could playgoers endure it? But they wept—believe me they wept”; about 1853’s “uninteresting” Bowery season: “one wonders how audiences remained loyal, year after year, to *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Nick of the Woods*, and similar delectabilities constantly revived”; and reviewing 1882, *Nick* seemed a “hoary antiquity.”⁶⁴⁷ A more restrained British

⁶⁴⁴ Brander Matthews, *A Book about the Theatre* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1916), 45; Milton Smith, *Guide to Play Selection*.

⁶⁴⁵ Barrett H. Clark, *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943).

⁶⁴⁶ Robert F. Roden, *Later American Plays, 1831-1900* (New York: Dunlap Society, 1900), 83.

⁶⁴⁷ George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-1949; New York, A.M.S. Press, 1970), 4: 316, 6: 226, 11: 65. Medina’s *Nick* is chronicled across vol. 4-14.

counterpart, the *Stage Cyclopaedia*, merely reiterates its recorded appearances, adding the bibliographic datum of Dicks' imprint.⁶⁴⁸ But even neutral lists reshape the record: the *Cyclopaedia* misnames Louisa Medina as *Rose* Medina in the entry for *Ernest Maltravers*, another twist in the trajectory of her name.

The book world was more uneven in its enumerations. Although *Nick* passed along a few second-hand book routes, old popular drama gained antique status only later—the drama collector Fred Atkinson remembered that he “hardly knew that there was such a thing as an early American play” in the early 1900s.⁶⁴⁹ *Nick* crops up in one publishing record, *American Book Publishing Record*, yet not in another, *The American Catalogue*.⁶⁵⁰ The influential bibliographies of American literature by Joseph Sabin and Lyle Wright included Medina's short fiction, but not her plays.⁶⁵¹ When *Nick* was recorded, the citation was still only partial. A bibliography could have named three editions, Spencer, French, and Dicks, although, since Samuel French's was still in circulation, it is the imprint we would expect to see. In fact Spencer's short-lived firm appears as often as the enduring publisher. The irregularities suggest that bibliography and the antique book trade steered clear from current acting edition play publishing (while they did recognize plays issued by general or artisan houses). Bibliographies of Bird's novel also did refer to the playscript, though never comprehensively: a preface to a new US edition cited only the British Dicks' edition (of Medina's “riotous melodrama”).⁶⁵² No list, that is, represented the total range—even such a modest range—of *Nick* editions; information was partial and scattered. The uneven representation in the book world was partly due to the aesthetic identity of the drama, for

⁶⁴⁸ Reginald Clarence, comp., *Stage Cyclopaedia: A Bibliography of Plays* (London: “The Stage,” 1909).

⁶⁴⁹ *American Drama in the Atkinson Collection*.

⁶⁵⁰ Appleton, *American Catalogue*.

⁶⁵¹ Joseph Sabin and Eames Wilberforce, *Bibliotheca Americana* (New York: Bibliographic Society of America, 1936); Lyle H. Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution toward a Bibliography* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1948).

⁶⁵² Cecil B. Williams, introduction to *Nick of the Woods*, by Robert M. Bird (New York: American Book Co., 1939), lxxii.

its denigrating features of dramatization and melodrama, and partly due to the material identity of the script, which does not always count as a *book* among book specialists, especially when a slim single playbook appeared in the format known as pamphlet. Even years later, when a theatre historian surveyed the rare books market, he lamented, “One hates to contemplate the number of these flimsily wrapped items that have been consigned to the trash bin by booksellers who could not be bothered.”⁶⁵³ While some old copies of *Nick* became rare books, similar ones became rubbish.

Peroration

To a great extent, these social fields operate somewhat autonomously, with separate nomenclatures and categories. For example, the handwritten actor’s copy called “part” or “side,” as described in chapter three, never earned a distinct classification library rubrics (and is sometimes catalogued under promptbook, or as an “actor’s promptbook”), an absence that affects research; some bibliography and library science references identify playscripts as “pamphlets,” a term not used in play publishing or play handling in theatre. Still, these operations of one cultural field are interlinked with other fields, even if only thinly, in ways suggested in this chapter about this era of expanding sites, processes, and documents of knowledge production. Modernist avant garde theatre informed college literary studies and drama projects, and educational institutions influenced amateur theatre. The book world intersected the realms of both learning and entertainment: Samuel French publications were consumed by libraries, amateur actors, and radio producers; and university archives acquired playscripts from book collectors and dealers, whose provenance lists dovetailed the field of bibliography. Both book world executives and gaslight era theatre artists donated playbooks, even of outmoded melodrama, to public libraries

⁶⁵³ James Ellis, “Book Selling and the Performing Arts,” in *Theatre and Performing Arts Collections*, ed. Louis A. Rachow (New York: Haworth, 1981), 117.

and college collections. Yet given the conventional divisions of academic disciplines, these separations of spheres become the proverbial cracks through which some subjects fall, leaving us with a misconception of cultural fields operating in isolation, extracted from flows (except flows of ideology, which are abundantly discussed). The path of the playscript *crosses* spheres—hence its routes highlight the interactions between arenas. Watching the material text, the physical thing and practices associated with it, reveals connections, commonalities, and communications *between* arenas, to enlarge our survey of knowledge and cultural production. These articulations are of course historically and culturally specific, and so are served by a focused case, such as this segment of the life course of certain playscripts.

Although libraries and lists did not themselves reproduce *Nick*, they preserved the script and knowledge of it. When Samuel French repackaged *Nick* in 1940, its preface declared that the play had spent “years of reposing on dusty library shelves”—promotional rhetoric that may have been somewhat accurate.⁶⁵⁴ But even a dusty shelf was a location in space, one more durable than a location in a trash bin, and that spatial position correlated to a position in other genres of writings—reference texts. The relocations and representations kept *Nick* in reserve for production (in theatrical revival) to which the next chapter turns, or for reproduction (in academic texts), the subject of the last chapter.

⁶⁵⁴ Tom Taggart, *Nick of the Woods; or, Telie, the Renegade's Daughter; an Old Melodrama in Three Acts* (New York: Samuel French, 1940), 96, New York Public Library.

Chapter Six:

Revived Playscripts in the Rise of Mass Media

To revisit the question that launched chapter five: what happens to the playscripts of an outmoded play? The answer in the last chapter entered the arena of information and learning, which, while not essentially new, were changing in degree and kind; the answer here pursues the play's purpose as entertainment, which also entailed new forms different from the state-of-the-art commercial spectacle productions of *Nick's* stage career. The fate of *Nick of the Woods* playscripts as workaday documents—that is, not merely preserved, but handled for theatre production—relies on the status of the play as entertainment, a status that of course changes when the play has become old or outmoded. At Joseph Proctor's retirement, *Nick* did not wholly withdraw from mainstream stages. In San Francisco, an early 1890s columnist reported a “curious revival” of the “long-famous legendary drama,”⁶⁵⁵ recalling Joseph Proctor's fifty years as the character Nick of the Woods while the actor was still living. But such curious revivals happened rarely and were recognizably distant from—not contiguous with—the play's main career. A review of a 1900 Boston matinee—the “first presentation in more than a dozen years”—praised it as “one of the staple old-time melodramas.”⁶⁵⁶ The adjective “old-time,” which appeared increasingly across the 1880s and 90s,⁶⁵⁷ was never invoked to qualify Renaissance and Restoration plays, since it connotes both out of fashion and formerly *popular* or common (rather than classic, enduring, or once elite). “Old time” highlights the modernity of the contemporary moment, as it affectionately recalls past practices. Two decades later, around the time that two

⁶⁵⁵ “Footlight Flashes,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (CA), April 30, 1893, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

⁶⁵⁶ *Boston Journal*, October 9, 1900, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

⁶⁵⁷ Calculated from instances of “old-time” in *New York Times*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. The phrase doubles each decade from 1870s to 1890s, before peaking in the 1910s.

copies entered the University of Chicago Library, *Nick* was incorporated in a magnified variety show, *Lambs' Public All-Star Gambit*, in New York City.⁶⁵⁸ Alongside the singer Irving Berlin and a purported four-hundred-member cast, the “dramatic gem” *Nick* came to the stage in an abridged or excerpted form, and as a different kind of act—an older US story, a melodrama—that would contribute to the variety of all acts in the gambit. *Nick* bore a patina. It had receded more than the older *Rip Van Winkle*, while it had never rooted itself as deeply in US culture as had *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Medina's *Nick* did re-appear, doubtless even more than records reveal, and that play remained her legacy, more than any other title in her oeuvre. Another *Ernest Maltravers* became a film, while *The Last Days of Pompeii* sprung up as a striking Coney Island water-and-fire spectacle and then also underwent remediation to film—yet both versions seem unrelated to Medina (and removed from stage drama). In terms of cultural meaning, *Nick's* trajectory implies that the quality of old-fashioned elicits a range of varied responses: it can be ignored; it might seem appealing as a historical phenomenon, especially in terms of national culture; or it might make the play ripe for parody (and parody itself spans a range of attitudes).

After 1920, *Nick's* function as entertainment served other sectors beyond mainstream stages: when used for popular and commercial amusement, it moved in mass media (radio and television), and if it continued in live theatre, it moved across the more marginal stages of low budget, educational, and amateur productions. These episodes crossed separate social contexts, distinct mediums, and different economic arrangements, an incongruent set I nonetheless assemble for the concerns of this chapter: all revived an old play and used playscripts as workaday documents. The utility scripts in many ways continued the long-running conventions described in chapter three, although the typewriter had largely replaced small-scale copying. As workaday things, however, these handled scripts have not survived well: one backstage copy,

⁶⁵⁸ Advertisement, *New York Tribune*, June 5, 1921, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

one new print edition, and the host of documents surrounding these respective productions supply the scant material of this reconstruction. Contemplating these fragments, this chapter considers the social and material context surrounding the script in new formations of old theatre and in new entertainment media. Given the transience and slim records of marginal entertainment, the instances described here are suggestive representatives drawing mainly from US cases, rather than an exhaustive international survey.

Before describing those episodes in turn, the quality of *old* and *outmoded* warrants brief consideration (although a thorough analysis of outmoded cultural forms is beyond my scope here). *Nick* aged less for *what* it depicted—when frontiers and Indians still ranked as popular subject matter⁶⁵⁹—than for *how* it depicted, that is, for the mode of spectacle melodrama. In the early twentieth century, melodrama co-existed on several theatrical tiers even as it disappeared from venerated modern drama. At one level were newly-written, earnest melodramas: David Belasco’s productions; Eugene O’Neill’s early plays; or the bathetic “Ten-Twenties-Thirties” plays (named for the ticket prices) that entertained general audiences and that “text-books in American literature do not even mention the existence of,” as their reprint editor complained.⁶⁶⁰ Belasco, promoting his own 1917 show, *Tiger Rose*, wrote acerbically about high-brow disdain for melodrama, invoking *Nick of the Woods* and its longtime star Joseph Proctor as some “notable examples of the world’s love of melodrama.” Melodrama became a crucible for cultural divides: this mode “most true to the actualities of life” was for Belasco especially appealing to Americans, who (to paraphrase) were primitive and valued strong, raw emotion, in contrast to

⁶⁵⁹ E.g., Zane Gray’s cowboy novels ranked as best-sellers in the 1910s and 20s. Michael Korda, *Making the List: a Cultural History of the Best Seller, 1900-1999* (New York: Barnes and Nobles, 2001), chap. 2 and 3. 33-54

⁶⁶⁰ Garret H. Leverton, introduction to *The Great Diamond Robbery and Other Recent Melodramas*, vol. 8 of *America’s Lost Drama*, ed. Barrett H. Clark (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940), viii.

stifled Europeans.⁶⁶¹ But Americans involved in other sectors of theatre eschewed it; social and cultural strata, probably more than nationality, informed these antithetical responses to melodrama. Even when still viable, melodrama no longer dominated serious theatre, especially at its elite, high-art levels, and even its more popular types differed from the *Nick* type based on elaborate spectacle. The titles of newly-written plays incorporated the term *melodrama*, as earlier melodramas had rarely done. Apart from some earnest ones, many used the term to signal their distance from the old mode, by toying with the genre label in phrases such as *comedy melodrama*, *old-time melodrama*, *romantic melodrama*, *rip-roaring melodrama*, *burlesque melodrama*, *mellow-drammer*, or, in better-known instances, G. B. Shaw's 1909 *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet; a Sermon in Crude Melodrama* and Karel Čapek's 1923 *R.U.R.: A Fantastic Melodrama*. The 1940 revision of *Nick* would express this distance by revising the sub-title from *a Drama, in Three Acts* to *an Old-Fashioned Melodrama*.⁶⁶² Melodrama persevered in text and on stage, and so also in the new entertainment media of film, radio, and television, albeit in no simple, monolithic way. Live theatre, especially in amateur and low-budget tiers, revived old melodrama in tones ranging from earnest, to light parody, to trenchant ridicule. (Gradations for which we still lack a systematic definition.) Because the realm of entertainment allows a wide range of attitudes toward a work, in contrast to the uniformly serious timbre of scholarship, *Nick* could receive more attention in the realm of entertainment until shifts in disciplines rendered melodrama viable as a subject of serious study, developments that were fomenting in this era.

Nick of the Woods in College

In a rare recorded instance of taking melodrama seriously inside the academy before the

⁶⁶¹ David Belasco, "Melodrama's the Thing," *New York Tribune*, October 7, 1917, Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress.

⁶⁶² Tom Taggart, Louisa Medina, and Thomas Haines, *Nick of the Woods; or, Telie, The Renegade's Daughter, an Old Melodrama in Three Acts with Music* (New York: Samuel French, 1940).

1960s, a production of *Nick of the Woods* entwined scholarship with entertainment. In 1936, the professor Jeannette Marks (1875-1964) staged part of *Nick* as the culmination of her “Interpretation of Master Plays” course in the English Literature and Drama department of Mount Holyoke College, the private women’s school in western Massachusetts. The production, *Scenes from American Plays*, presented sections of three US plays spanning half-century intervals: Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* (1787), a Restoration-style comedy; Medina’s *Nick of the Woods* (1838); and Bronson Howard’s comedy *The Henrietta* (1887), the story of which had been used for a silent film.⁶⁶³ *Scenes from American Plays* presented part—either the second half (according to publicity) or a “condensation” (according to a faculty report)—of the play the promotion sometimes called *Nick O’ the Woods*.⁶⁶⁴ Under the guidance of six women and men faculty members, the young women enrolled in “Playshop 347-348” conducted “analysis” of “dramatic methods....study of the historical and social backgrounds” as well as the theatre of each period, besides practicing the skills of making models, sketching costumes, and acting.⁶⁶⁵ They strove to replicate each play’s original staging conditions, using wings and backdrops, though for the more hazardous element of lighting they prudently resorted to an electric simulation of gaslight. Even when presenting a work that seemed risible, the performance avoided mockery: the play’s “stilted, wordy speeches” were made “laughter-free by practice,” its dated roles “played in all earnestness,” in efforts to appear “as serious as both the actors and audience would have been in 1838.”⁶⁶⁶ Yet, as a hybrid of informing and entertaining, it proved “amusing” to the contemporary audience, who supplied “hissing, booing, and clapping at

⁶⁶³ *The Saphead*, dir. Herbert Blanché, Metro Pictures, 1920. The film starred Buster Keaton.

⁶⁶⁴ Jeannette Marks, TS letter/report to President Woolley, June 8, 1936, English Literature and Drama Department Records, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College Library.

⁶⁶⁵ Marks, “The New Dramatic Major at Mount Holyoke College,” TS report, n/d, ca. 1930s, Theatre Arts Department Records, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College Library. The report on the Playshop Laboratory—including the course that staged *Nick*—iterates its readiness to offer a major in drama.

⁶⁶⁶ L. H., C. P., and E. S., “A Year a Day in the Laboratory Theatre,” *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly*, August 1936, 78-80, Theatre Arts Department Records. By-line initials in the original.

appropriate times,” according to a college reporter.⁶⁶⁷ The program notes anticipated the jovial reception: “We make no apologies for any amusement at the expense of these past modes, in which we hope you will share.”⁶⁶⁸ That cooperative performing by the audience, enacting (what they imagined to be) audiences from an earlier era, had perhaps already become integral to the larger trend of melodrama revival, although more usually occurring in non-academic spaces, as in two cases discussed below. Different from many revivals, the Mount Holyoke production offered a historical reconstruction (re-creation)—that is, it occurred within an educational frame, aiming to instruct participants and audiences.⁶⁶⁹

Apart from the trend of reviving old drama, the college production represents the then-growing current of integrating theatre and drama of many stripes into educational programs, an ethos that recognized a utility in theatre for higher goals beyond mere entertainment—though it rarely relied on spectacle melodrama to achieve those aims. Riding this current in Mount Holyoke, Marks “conceived the idea of an Academy of the American Theatre as offering a laboratory experience,”⁶⁷⁰ part of her effort to treat drama seriously in both study and practice. A dissertation about drama in the college emphasized the gravity of her endeavor, asserting that a “dilettante attitude was definitely not countenanced” in Marks’s Playshop,⁶⁷¹ when dilettantes were still the common product of elite women’s education. She titled these programs “Playshop” and “Laboratory,” borrowing terms fashionable in avant-garde and little theatre projects and in modern culture in general, which deliberately echoed the artisanal *workshop* and scientific

⁶⁶⁷ “Playshop Gives Drama with American Origin,” *Mount Holyoke News*, April 24, 1936, Mount Holyoke Theatre Arts Department Records, 1, 9.

⁶⁶⁸ Playshop Laboratory Theatre, *Scenes from Earlier American Drama, 1787-1887*, Mount Holyoke College, April 20-21, 1936, Theatre Arts Department Records. Theatre program (hereafter cited as Playshop Program).

⁶⁶⁹ Katherine Newey, “Embodied History: Reflections on the Jane Scott Project,” *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 66-70, <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/uploads/docs/290066.pdf>. Newey distinguishes *reconstruction* from *revival*.

⁶⁷⁰ Marks, “The New Dramatic Major.”

⁶⁷¹ Eilda Stahl Wagner, “A History of Forms of Dramatic Expression in Mount Holyoke College, 1837-1950,” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1953), Theatre Arts Department Records, Mount Holyoke College.

laboratory, hallmarks of a modernist ethos. What the program similarly called an “experiment” was reported as effective by students: “it was chiefly through the actual staging of a progression of American plays that we have come to realize concretely the evolution...of the American theatre.”⁶⁷² The articulation of success involved concepts of progress and evolution, the conceptual counterparts to the workshop and laboratory methods.

Enfolded in the formal educational program in Mount Holyoke, Marks’s course stands as an early instance of valuing an outmoded play for intellectual reasons. Attention to American literature of any kind had acquired imprimatur only recently. When Marks herself was an undergraduate, according to a history of English studies, a curriculum with American literature could stigmatize a program as less professional, when PhD programs stressed philology or European languages. Under that value hierarchy, women’s colleges (which hired fewer PhDs and were positioned outside the Ivy League networks) were among the first to welcome New England novels and poetry into syllabi, until a rising historical orientation countered philology in the field, opening room for at least quality US authors by the 1930s.⁶⁷³ Later academic shifts following two waves of social history would render *Nick* valuable as an index, or symptom, of national culture and ideology—different from its being a drop in the historical stream of dramatic literature (as I explain in the next chapter). Granted, *Nick* had already entered the realm of higher education: in Brander Matthews’ Columbia University Drama Museum; in a 1920s Chicago University English course; and among the shelves of academic libraries. And it may have been performed as recreational activity, when theatre clubs were normal fixtures on college campuses (before these were supplanted by formal programs). But I have seen no other sign of its having

⁶⁷² L. H. *et al*, “Laboratory Theatre,” 80.

⁶⁷³ Elizabeth Renker, “American Literature in the College Curriculum: Three Case Studies, 1890-1910,” *ELH* 67, no. 3 (2000): 843-871, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30031939>; Julie T. Klein, “Interdisciplinary Genealogy in Literary Studies,” in *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity, and Interdisciplinarity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), chap. 4.

been staged pedagogically. And, while the histories of US drama would identify melodrama as the characteristic type of play for the middle era of the event's triptych, Marks's choice of *Nick* as the delegate of spectacle melodrama is noteworthy, when other accounts of national theatre history dismissed the play.

Although never mentioned in the flurry of promotional texts for the show, staging *Nick* in a single-sex college bore distinct implications, in contrast to the rest of the play's life. In *Nick*, women not only cross-dressed, but they played *violent* male roles—Nathan/Nick (Kathryn Howard), the savage Wenonga (Eleanor Ferguson), the evil white Braxley (Ruth Coleman), while lower-level students played extra male Indians. Students presumably understood that Medina was a forgotten *woman* playwright, even if the audience program obscured her gender. Decades before the advent of feminist “Herstory,” this attention to a woman writer tacitly suggested a legacy behind *contemporary* women playwrights, a link to Marks herself, or the students in her playwriting course (which ran separate from the playshop).⁶⁷⁴ In suffrage and other efforts, Marks embraced feminism, an ethos that presumably informed both her selection of Medina's work and her prohibition of women's dilettantism. Backstage work especially enabled young women to train in tasks elsewhere dominated by men, and the program identifies women by name alone, without the marital-status prefix (Miss or Mrs)—a stark difference from *Nick*'s earlier playbills and programs. If she reconstructed old plays and technology, Marks steered the means and manifestations of the production in tune with a modern view of women.

Jeannette Marks and College Little Theatre

For Jeannette Marks, *Nick* and the rest of *Scenes from American Plays* may have served other functions in relation to her career; in current terms, the event *performed* something besides

⁶⁷⁴ Anna Mary Wells, *Miss Marks and Miss Woolley* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 190-196. The biographer relays her personal account, as a former student of Mount Holyoke, of Marks's playwriting pedagogy.

the old plays. Marks was a faculty member with tenuous standing professionally and an unusual position personally, as the partner in a publicly-recognized but unidentified intimate bond with the college president, Mary Woolley, whose house she shared.⁶⁷⁵ Producing plays under the banner of lab and workshop validated the costly construction of the campus's Little Theatre, for which Marks had pressured President Woolley to fundraise and devote moneys, when funds were coveted by other expanding departments run by higher-level faculty.⁶⁷⁶ By its framing and fanfare, the production also would have justified Marks's title of professor and her status as expert in drama, despite her having only a MA degree; the advanced degree was becoming the norm for faculty at women's schools in general, and at Mount Holyoke in particular, as President Woolley elevated the school from a marginal girls' school (called seminary) to a legitimate college in the prestigious higher education network.⁶⁷⁷ Marks's status was not always respected, alongside PhD scholars, even if it was secured by her intimacy with the president Woolley (which itself was not untroubled). She wrangled in turf struggles over speech, drama, and literature courses, while the drama club, supervised by a different professor, stayed aloof from her projects.⁶⁷⁸ These problems might explain her multiple credits in the theatre program, which identifies her as overall director and "script head"⁶⁷⁹ (a title I have seen nowhere else), emphasizing her status as theatre practitioner. Eliding tensions, her formal report invoked the subject of cooperative relations, concluding that the course "represented an interesting and valuable experiment in methods of group study and in collaboration on the part of instructors."⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁵ Wells, *Miss Marks*. Wells entwines the biographies of Marks and Woolley, couching their conjoined lives within the uneasy development of women's higher education in the early twentieth century.

⁶⁷⁶ Wells, *Miss Marks*, 203-206.

⁶⁷⁷ Wells, *Miss Marks*. On Woolley's endeavor, see chap. 4. On the tensions around Marks's status, see 79, 96, 106, and *passim*.

⁶⁷⁸ Wells, *Miss Marks*.

⁶⁷⁹ Playshop program. The apostrophe in '*script*' suggests that the truncation had not yet become a standard synonym for *playscript*, at least not in formal collegiate English.

⁶⁸⁰ Marks, TS letter/report, June 8, 1936.

Marks's own literary work participated in the education/entertainment circulations described in this and the prior chapter. Like Medina, she wrote across genres: plays, fiction, and even text related to legal court cases, a poetic account of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial (different from Medina, who had written her own testimony).⁶⁸¹ She published stories for children, while for adult readers she fictionalized scientific research on drug addiction. Perhaps enigmatically, she wrote *against* lesbian relationships among students (in a small piece that would overshadow her other writing when, a half-century later, her own same-sex relationship became a crucible in early Lesbian Studies).⁶⁸² Though she never trained in theatre, Marks did associate with Modern and Little Theatre, enough that one of her plays was considered by the Washington Square Players in New York and another won the Welsh National Theatre Prize for plays about Wales.⁶⁸³ Although some pieces never reached the public through print or stage, a few reached amateur and educational arenas when, for example, the North Dakota Agricultural College reprinted work by Marks alongside "Tche-koff" (Chekov) in a volume intended to stimulate "workers in community recreation,"⁶⁸⁴ and the Wales title joined a list of "representative plays," the reference genre I discussed earlier.⁶⁸⁵ Marks also wrote administrative documents related to teaching, another genre of college drama's behind-the-scenes texts. In a formal report, Marks promoted the burgeoning drama major as fungible professional training, good not only for

⁶⁸¹ Wells, *Miss Marks*, chap. 5, on the trial report, 199; Marks, *Thirteen Days* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1929).

⁶⁸² Blanche W. Cook, "'Women Alone Stir My Imagination': Lesbianism and the Cultural Tradition," *Signs*, 4, no. 4 (Summer 1979), 738-9. In Cook's view, Wells's deduction that the relationship was non-sexual (Wells, *Miss Marks*, 194) showed a "historical denial." Still, the mere suggestion of the pair's intimacy no doubt appalled many Mount Holyoke associates, and whether homosocial or homosexual, the 47-year bond circumvented the social norm (in the current lexicon, it was non-heteronormative).

⁶⁸³ "Washington Square Players' Plans," *New York Times* (August 30, 1917), ProQuest Historical New York Times; Marks, *Three Welsh Plays: the Merry Merry Cuckoo, The Deacon's Hat, and Welsh Honeymoon* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1917).

⁶⁸⁴ "Book Notes," Drama League of America, *Drama Magazine* 11 (January 1921): 135, accessed May 12, 2009, Google Books, www.books.google.com. The column mentions the "tiny volume," *Public Programs*.

⁶⁸⁵ B. Roland Lewis, "One Hundred Representative One-Act Plays," *Drama Magazine* 11, April 1921, 258, accessed November 4, 2010, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

alumnae careers, but for the nation: “Students can thus gain a solid preparation for professional, little theatre, or community theatre work, or for teaching dramatics in preparatory schools,” as well as in public schools, all of which “is an increasingly important factor in the educational and social life of American communities.”⁶⁸⁶ In a history of the field, performance scholar Shannon Jackson describes the contradictory admixture of these early germinations: the “would-be discipline of theatre indiscriminately borrowed the language of disciplinary specialization, of practicality, of scholarly rigor, of democracy, or of civil ideals.”⁶⁸⁷ While echoing the civil ideals expressed by Brander Matthews and sundry drama lists, Marks’s views positioned her further toward the progressive, leftist, side of the political spectrum—the Little Theatre movement encompassed a variety of political views. Her social commitments are manifest in the design and format of the playshop, as hands-on and intellectual training for future theatre educators, although not in the content of *Nick of the Woods*, which was reconstructed for its historical import, not recommended for its ideology.

Modern Theatre Documents

The trajectory of that *Nick* playscript is not preserved. No report mentions the playscript, even if Marks credited herself as “script head.” The effusive student reporters mention lighting, wings, and costumes, but never a promptbook or copies. Nor is the playscript preserved within institutional collections—not in Jeannette Marks’s papers or English or Theatre department files—and it is not housed in the regular library. The nearest copies reside in the former men’s school, Amherst College, the result of the donations described in the last chapter.

But tangential documents survived. Marks’s “laboratory” project generated multiple documents, an index of the shifts in theatre productions’ nexus of texts in general. Press-releases

⁶⁸⁶ Marks, “The New Dramatic Major.”

⁶⁸⁷ Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chap. 2, 20.

reached not only local papers, but also the *New York Times*, which announced it as an interesting cultural event notable for its technical reconstruction (though without highlighting the all-woman cast); implicitly, too, a private women's college endeavor was relevant to the paper's high society readership. Students reported both the preparation and the event in the school's paper, after which a follow-up article addressed to college alumnae included a photograph, not of a stage scene, but of stage crew, garbed in overalls, working backstage. Photographs had become part of the constellation of theatre texts, in promotional material and published playscripts (though never in *Nick of the Woods* reprints). Yet Mount Holyoke's tickets differed from city theatre events: the Playshop printed and sent template invitations—black-letter cards hand inscribed with each guest's name, the fully-spelled date, the show title, and an RSVP deadline—which doubled as the holder's entry pass.⁶⁸⁸ While the ticket design insisted on the social class status of Mount Holyoke (and its audience), the program was a hybrid of styles and genres amounting to a modern representation of antique forms. Typical of many references to nineteenth-century theatre, it visually quoted the old-fashioned playbill style (in vertical layout and a tasteful allusion to “fat face” typography), and at top it identified the theatre “proprietor” (Mount Holyoke College), as old bills of *Nick* identified the manager, lessee, or theatre owner. In tune with a production that capped a college project, though, the program also expressed didactic functions, informing as it entertained. It did not identify Medina as a woman writer, using instead her initials L. H. (as her by-lines had sometimes done). Below the cast list came a genesis of the work. Ignoring Medina, the passage tilts toward the literary substratum of the play, foregrounding Bird's novel. The passage relays Bird's purported intent to correct the portrait of James Fenimore Cooper's “romanticized Indian”; his depiction of frontier types; and the real-

⁶⁸⁸ Invitation/ticket, print and MS notes, *Scenes from Earlier American Drama, 1787-1887*, Playshop Laboratory, Mount Holyoke College, April 20-21, 1936, Theatre Arts Department Records, Mount Holyoke College.

world basis for “the half-crazed” Nathan/Nick persona. Echoing the influential study of American humor by Constance Roarke,⁶⁸⁹ which advanced a national-character thesis, the rest of the passage explains Bird’s frontier figures as ethnographically accurate: “Braggarts like Ralph Stackpole, blustering, good-hearted, and touched with native American humor, were products of frontier conditions.”⁶⁹⁰ In centering on *bona fide* literature and real-world conditions rather than on theatre, the program was anomalous among revivals of the era and actually incongruent with other aspects of this production, including audience reactions. All revivals involved history, or an historiography, implicit or explicit, but most referred primarily to *the old play*, to the theatrical *mediation* of history, a phase in the evolution of the nation’s theatre—rather than to the novel it dramatized or the historic world that novel claimed to depict.

Nick of the Woods on the Radio

Later that same year, *Nick* was aired on commercial radio, WOR station, in New York City.⁶⁹¹ Of all the instances surveyed in this chapter, the AM broadcast is the least identifiable. The slot on Sunday at nine o’clock p.m. likely targeted entire families—youth and adults of both genders (unlike the daytime food shows)—and hence its timing is hardly informative. The listing in the Sunday paper does specify the genre as “play,” not “drama,” the term used for a rival station’s *Oedipus Rex* that Tuesday. This *Nick* may have been presented as an earnest revival, when Bird’s novel was still presumably read, and the frontier and Indians trope recurred in serious stories through all entertainment mediums, with representations of Indians still vacillating between noble and ignoble, though we can’t know how it was delivered.

⁶⁸⁹ Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931).

⁶⁹⁰ Playshop program.

⁶⁹¹ “Radio Programs Scheduled for Broadcast This Week,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1936, 12, ProQuest Historical New York Times.

The larger context, at least, is clearer, given its moment in the history of US radio. The *Nick* broadcast would have come punctuated by commercials. Soon after radio's migration from the military and technical buffs in the 1920s, government policies effectively surrendered control to privatization and corporate interest, according to media historians,⁶⁹² albeit maintaining their regulation through the mechanism of licensing.⁶⁹³ The eight stations in operation all travelled the AM band, with FM still decades away, yet AM was not uniform: WOR's initial designation as "Class B" required that it air live shows rather than recordings (which were thought to repel audiences). The corporations' own regulations required non-controversial—not socially critical—material; *Nick* would meet both stipulations, as unprogressive, live entertainment.

Nick's broadcast cannot be considered inevitable (since the play was never remediated to film), but nor was it anomalous. Old plays were transmitted through the "wireless," though they were probably outnumbered by new dramas (drama was one of the more popular formats), or variety "talent" formats (the counterpart to live stage vaudeville), or other types of shows, such as the ones transmitted that same week: "spelling bee," talk shows, "family counselor," interviews, "commentator," and astrology. Rather than old/new, the more clear division of radio drama was the high/low split, if only implicitly. *Nick* probably belonged to the stratum of popular drama under commercial sponsors, that is, funded by advertisements. On the other tier came the network sponsored, commercial-free "prestige drama"⁶⁹⁴—which in the US was still corporate rather than government-run, unlike the BBC of the UK—evidenced *Oedipus Rex* performed by Federal Theatre Project actors two days after *Nick* on the experimental station

⁶⁹² Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 49-50.

⁶⁹³ Hilmes, *Radio Voices*, 49-50.

⁶⁹⁴ Allison McCracken, "Radio Drama," *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*, ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast (Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 2000), 160-2.

W2XR (now WQXR).⁶⁹⁵ The two strands would converge in some broadcasts, such as Orson Welles's renowned program (which was sponsored by Campbell's Soup). Old plays may have embodied both popular and prestige qualities, a mixed vehicle for product advertising.

Three years after the *Nick* broadcast, in 1939, the scholar Barrett Clark presented radio versions of "America's Lost Plays" for the National Broadcasting Company on the AT&T station WEAf (since evolved to WNBC). He introduced the reading bibliographically, by describing the recovery of the lost manuscripts, as he would explain in his written introduction to the corresponding volume of *America's Lost Plays and Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century*, published a few years later (but not including *Nick*, as I discuss in the next chapter).⁶⁹⁶ Besides popular comedy dialogue, such as *Amos and Andy*, new work for radio also opened an avenue for literary playwrights. This new respectable writing emerged in the juncture of institutions of learning, art theatre, and mass media: a director at CBS radio, also director of the New York University "radio workshop," edited an anthology of "better" scripts written "for the requirements of the microphone."⁶⁹⁷ In the UK, the theatre scholar Martin Esslin helped produce a BBC afternoon series, *International Theatre of the Air*, which would graduate dramatists to successful careers.⁶⁹⁸ New re-mediations of old popular drama, though, lend themselves to distinct themes relative to new plays and new genres; *Nick of the Woods*, for example, might have been familiar to older listeners, or to audiences involved in live theatre revivals.

Radio drama also became a textual market. Play agents brokered contracts for radio

⁶⁹⁵ On the genesis of this "experimental" station (indicated by a number in the acronym), see Frank Earnest Hill *Listen and Learn: Fifteen Years of Adult Education on the Air* (New York, American Association for Adult Education, 1937), 89.

⁶⁹⁶ Barrett H. Clark, introduction to *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), x. On the development of WEAf in general, see Hilmes, *Radio Voices*, 60-63.

⁶⁹⁷ Douglas Coulter, ed., preface to *Columbia Workshop Plays: Fourteen Radio Dramas* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), x. "Columbia" denotes the broadcasting "system," or corporation—not the university.

⁶⁹⁸ Asa Briggs, *The BBC: The First Fifty Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 334.

drama, *inter alia*. Rivaling the anthologies of mainstream publishers, the US Samuel French office began publishing plays for radio. This new genre expanded copyright laws in new formulations: McGraw-Hill's *Columbia Workshop Plays* could be used for "good reading material," script-writing guidance, and "other purposes involving no financial profit," but not for actual production.⁶⁹⁹ Samuel French included the medium in its proscription that "no performance....or radio broadcasting may be given except by special arrangement."⁷⁰⁰ The warnings were relevant when directors might still have been able to purchase *Nick* from Samuel French, while they could also copy it from a library holding—and librarians listed radio producers as one of the patrons of institutional theatre collections.⁷⁰¹

The remediation of the *play* involved drastic transformation in relation to space and audience, from semi-public site and group to residents in private homes; this process happens at the level of *transmission* media, distinct from *inscription* media, to borrow the categories of Lisa Gitelman's historical study.⁷⁰² Radio broadcasts required a few changes to the *playtext*, especially to stage directions, as visual and spatial effects were translated into sound.⁷⁰³ And radio shows engendered new formats of public texts, when shows were not advertised separately in print as they were for theatre (that I know of), but rather compiled in newspaper columns as an information resource rather than news, as in the schedule cited above. In this format *Nick's* title appeared with the genre label (play), but without sub-title, author or other credits. Though announced beforehand, the production left almost no trace *afterwards*, as radio plays often do not,

⁶⁹⁹ Coulter, preface, *Columbia Workshop*, v.

⁷⁰⁰ Copyright clause on *Altogether Reformed*, by Stanley Kauffman (New York: Samuel French, 1936).

⁷⁰¹ Evelyn Hisz, "History of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center," (MS Thesis, Long Island University, 1969), 29, 30.

⁷⁰² Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2006), chap. 1.

⁷⁰³ André Helbo, Dines Johanson, and Patrice Pavis, *Approaching Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 43.

according to one of the few systematic accounts of theatre's interrelation with mass media.⁷⁰⁴

Paratext, genre format, and other documents in the production's nexus of texts did change. But radio did not entail new media for the *playscript*, which took the same material form, produced by the same means, as scripts for theatre or film.

Melodrama Revival and Parody Publishing

Revivals came in varied kinds; that is, they covered a range of possible attitudes toward, and representations of, the source work. My discussion brackets out old *comedy*, which endures differently than melodrama does; the spate of revivals of Ana Cora Mowatt's *Fashion*⁷⁰⁵ presumably still registered as an amusing satire of Europhilic social pretension, rather than as an outmoded theatre style. Again, some revivals of old serious drama did handle it earnestly. The Parish Theatre guide described in chapter five recommended *Nick* as a serious work, and in 1921 a *Los Angeles Times* column wondered, when other "old-fashioned shows" were being revived, "what is the matter with" *Nick* and others (though it concludes that the retirement or death of the old actors precluded such a revival).⁷⁰⁶ Conceivably, for some audiences the plot of *Nick*, at least, could seem contiguous with contemporary, mass-audience serious stories, in comic strips or new media, though its locutions had to have seemed antique (as in Telie's act four, scene three exclamation, "Alas! then droop my hope to blight the heart which promised so much bliss"). But for many adult audiences, old, earnest melodrama had transmogrified into modern comedy. Parody often relies on exaggeration, and exaggeration—of emotion, gesture, and morality—lies waiting in melodrama, as scholars such as James Cherry have explained about this twentieth-

⁷⁰⁴ Helbo, Johanson, and Pavis, *Approaching Theatre*, 45-46.

⁷⁰⁵ Milton Smith, *Guide to Play Selection* (New York: National Council of Teachers of English/Appleton-Century, 1934), 37.

⁷⁰⁶ "Pen Points," *Los Angeles Times*, January 10, 1922, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

century trend.⁷⁰⁷ In the introduction to the 1940 revision of *Nick*, Tom Taggart refers to an “an epidemic of revivals of old melodramas” in this vein: “audiences everywhere laughed themselves sick at *The Drunkard*, [...] *Under the Gaslight*, and *The Streets of New York*.”⁷⁰⁸ One of the later *Nick* revivalists, Greig Steiner, called the trend “endemic” in his epistolary history of the movement: “I’m sure you know of all the barroom productions (highly curtailed) of *The Drunkard* that were endemic for a number of years in the 50s-60s and even into the 70s.... People went from one place to another to see a variety of productions for comparison.”⁷⁰⁹ Certain sub-genres and titles became “perennial favorites,” as Steiner explained, especially temperance drama and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (both analyzed closely by Cherry).⁷¹⁰ In 1955, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* seemed “still sure-fire today though its effect on audiences has veered from tears to laughter,” according to a theatre journalist.⁷¹¹ *Nick* belonged in the B-grade of popular revivals. These plays’ history as once-popular enriched this appeal (in contrast to the erudite project of recovering obscure, unsuccessful plays by respected writers). Titles and sub-titles, such as Taggart’s genre tag, “old-fashioned melodrama,” together with the event’s promotional material, signaled *affectionate* mockery, not trenchant critique. Old theatre—variety show, minstrel show, melodrama—provoked a blend of nostalgia and ridicule. To oversimplify: the *society* represented in the plays (the signified) seemed quaint, and perhaps enviable, while the *aesthetics* of the representation (the signifier) seemed risible. Both strands and their inexorable entwining are more complex than I can articulate here, but the rough distinction serves this brief survey: the comedy lay in the simulation of outmoded theatrical phenomena in some relation to the satire of

⁷⁰⁷ James Cherry, “Melodrama, Parody, and the Transformations of an American Genre” (PhD Dissertation, City University of New York, 2005), 6-9.

⁷⁰⁸ Taggart, “Story of Play,” in *Nick*, 3.

⁷⁰⁹ Greig Steiner, email to author, May 29, 2009.

⁷¹⁰ Taggart, introduction to *Nick*, 3; Cherry, “Melodrama,” chap. 2 and 3.

⁷¹¹ Leota Diesel, “Samuel French: the House that Plays Built,” *Theatre Arts*, 39, no. 8 (August 1955): 92.

the old-fashioned social phenomena represented.⁷¹² Both the substance and the style could be understood as part of national heritage, insofar as that mattered to audiences. (The scholar Margaret Mayorga explained 1930s revivals—without indicating whether they were in earnest or parody—as a sign of “the growing interest of the general public in American drama.”)⁷¹³ The context of these productions in relatively low-budget projects is related to the mode of parody, since most producers could not reproduce the old infrastructure (which had been state-of-the-art, capital-intensive, in its day)—the lavish proscenium, the sizable crew, an orchestra, and large-scale special effects. The low-technology productions’ quotations of those tangible effects—rendered through varying tactics—reinforced the satire of language and acting style.

The antiquarian parody appealed especially to amateurs. This arena of non-professional theatre emerged from older, mostly homo-social, male traditions that intensified as middle- or upper-class women participated in public or semi-public cultural arenas (especially in charity functions during and after the Civil War). Amateur theatre also developed in symbiosis with commercial play publishing. As acting editions proliferated in the nineteenth century (the unfolding surveyed in chapter four), publishers designed them for amateurs by adding explanations, assembling catalogue sub-sets, and scaling lower prices for non-profit producers. Samuel French remained the dominant amateur supplier, even after other houses emerged dedicated to amateur theatre.⁷¹⁴ Amateurs had long been using regular acting editions, as well as wigs, scenery, light effects, how-to books, and costume pictures—supplies also sold by publishers. Samuel French issued new series of scripts suitable for the low-budget, neophyte

⁷¹² Cherry, “Melodrama,” chap. 1. While Cherry’s analysis focuses on parody (by anyone) of outmoded *ideology* (e.g., nationalism), mine emphasizes parody of outmoded *theatricality* and the marginal context from which it emerges.

⁷¹³ Margaret G. Mayorga, *A Short History of the American Drama: Commentaries on Plays Prior to 1920* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1932), xiv.

⁷¹⁴ Diesel, “Samuel French.” For a scrutiny of one smaller firm, Dennison’s, see Kevin Byrne, “The Circulation of Blackface: Nostalgia and Tradition in US Minstrel Performance of the Early 1920s” (PhD Dissertation, City University of New York, 2010), 96-108.

level, labeled for niche groups—military, all-boys (“camp, cabin, and club”), the girls’ counterpart, or adult. Amateur playscripts thus manifest a paradox of cultural economies: they targeted *non*-commercial theatre practitioners, yet were unmistakably commercial commodities (albeit intermediary commodities, as a means to another activity). Under stronger intellectual property laws, publishers regulated—or tried to—the staging of plays and even small scale copying of playbooks, shaping the customs of acquiring and using scripts.

After theatre companies had begun to parody old popular plays by adapting scripts themselves, Samuel French capitalized on this trend by repackaging old plays for amateurs. These books, combining a revised text with extensive how-to guidance, especially targeted “groups with limited production facilities,” as the 1940 *Nick* explained.⁷¹⁵ In particular, as that edition implies, this niche was populated by people who lacked the skill needed to rework an old melodramas, given their predominantly male casts, unfamiliar set technology, slow tempo, and “unattractive old texts.”⁷¹⁶ These revised scripts commodified the do-it-yourself practices of independent parodies. Around 1940, publishers issued a spate of “gaslight” and “old melodrama” titles, accompanied by a few song compilations in books or records. Revival parody constituted a multi-media market. A 1955 theatre magazine profile of the publisher Samuel French dwelt especially on these parody playscripts, one of the company’s more lucrative products.⁷¹⁷

Nick of the Woods for Amateurs

Just over a century after its premiere, Medina’s *Nick*, “only recently discovered in the files of Samuel French,” was repackaged for amateurs by the playwright Tom Taggart and Samuel French.⁷¹⁸ This 1940 issue marked the first new version of *Nick* to be printed since the

⁷¹⁵ Taggart, introduction to *Nick*, 6.

⁷¹⁶ Taggart, introduction to *Nick of the Woods*, 17.

⁷¹⁷ Diesel, “Samuel French.”

⁷¹⁸ Taggart, “Story of Play,” in *Nick*, 3. (“Story” refers to genesis and background, not synopsis.)

1850s, but it was the first actual new *edition* ever (since it involved substantial textual transformation)—and it would also be the last of either up to 2012. Those distinctions warrant my lengthy attention to it here. In physical format, the play looked much the same as old copies for its pamphlet size and its lack of illustration (even after scripts had begun to include photographs of stage stills), though it came on more sturdy paper and in a thick, blue, card cover (not a fragile paper wrapper), which bore one of the company trademarks, a rising dog-lion chimera. By now, French had to identify the manufacture location—“Printed in the United States”—if not the printing firm. In printing technology, hand composing and stereotype plates had been supplanted by either advanced mechanics (linotype) or electric means (electrotype), although the method is not discernible from any specimen, except when reprints using old stereotype plates show the impression of worn, marred letters.⁷¹⁹

While the new *Nick* harkens to an “old-time” context, the playbook exuded a modern materiality, especially in property rights. Samuel French announced elaborate copyright warnings and other regulations, claims that expanded in book space across the cover, cover verso, and title page, and in world space beyond the US to the British Empire, the Dominion of Canada (the publisher by then ran an office in Toronto), and “other countries in the Copyright Union.” The fifty-cent price of the book covered only using it for *reading*, whereas patrons intending to stage a play required a license or contract that incurred an additional fee, which the publisher scaled according to the producer’s financial aim: lower if for “charity” (amateur), higher if for “gain” (professional). To underscore the imperative, the copyright passage iterated the penalties for transgression, which were also slated: hefty fees for amateurs and heavier fees or jail time for

⁷¹⁹ Rob Banham, “The Industrialization of the Book, 1800-1970,” in Eliot and Rose, *Companion to the History of the Book* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), chap. 20. 273-290.

professionals.⁷²⁰ The regulation was even inscribed in the name of the sub-set into which *Nick* fell, “Ten-Dollar Royalty Plays,” where “royalty” means production fee, and ten dollars names the rate for amateurs.⁷²¹ (The royalty plus the mandatory six copies would have cost amateurs thirteen dollars.)

In his prefatory texts, Taggart explained that he drafted the script for an amateur production with the Theatre Workshop of Cleveland. (He does not say whether or what he charged for his service.) Targeting amateurs induced him to reshape the play in a way suggestive of authentic old-fashioned theatre—an authenticity that partly exposed its own artifice—as fodder for gentle ridicule. *Nick*, his preface explains, “has all those familiar situations which lend themselves to hilarious burlesque....all the blood and thunder which was taken so seriously a few generations ago and at which modern audiences never stop laughing.”⁷²² Presenting an outmoded play for parody required transforming the playscript at several levels, changes that created a playbook unlike its nineteenth-century forebears.

At the level of the dramatic story, Taggart reduced the length, to shorten the event and accelerate the “tempo.” At the level of rhetoric, he “removed the old-time wordiness,”⁷²³ while retaining the quaint remnants of idiom and phrase. He softened the religious overtones, having Nick carve a “criss-cross” instead of a Christian cross on his victim’s body.⁷²⁴ He did, however, retain the savage portrait of Indians. To guide non-professionals, Taggart changed not only dialogue and action, but the textual features that inform reading: character labels (or “prefixes”) and stage directions. In earlier scripts, the lead character’s changes were implied; Proctor and

⁷²⁰ Samuel French, copyright clauses, *Nick of the Woods*, by Taggart, cover, title page, and title page verso.

⁷²¹ Samuel French, *1940 Catalogue to French’s Catalogue of Plays* (New York: Samuel French, 1940), New York Public Library.

⁷²² Taggart, *Nick*, 7.

⁷²³ Taggart, *Nick*, 96. The quotation comes from his suggested publicity blurb.

⁷²⁴ Taggart, *Nick*, 42.

other actors knew when to enact the off-kilter Quaker, the super-human avenger, or the family man, Reginald Ashburn (the lost persona who is restored in the finale). Taggart's stage directions *explain* when Nathan/Nick switches personas: in the finale, the character "Springs forward, throws off his disguise as NATHAN and appears as REGINALD ASHBURN."

The same shift happened to stage effects. In the old versions of *Nick*, the stage directions narrated events in the imaginary play-world, which professionals knew how to induce by one device or another. At the end of Act I in Medina's version, for example, the vigilante Nick of the Woods announces himself from an imposing, elevated position:

Nathan. (*Appearing suddenly on bridge*). 'Twas I, the Jibbenainosay.
(*Music. Picture of horror—lightening, thunder, &c.*)

The passage makes no mention of *means*, only end result—a figure's appearance, or thunder. Equally taciturn was Medina's signature scene of Nick/Jibbeaninosay "precipitated down the cataract in a canoe of fire," a stage direction accompanied by no specification of method (though we can surmise cloth or paper "flames" and a hidden mechanism to advance the canoe down simulated rushing water).⁷²⁵ Taggart merges these spectacles, placing Nick at the top of the waterfall, an effect he explicates: a painted profile of a waterfall gets "shoved on," behind which stands a step-ladder "so that a person may appear at the top of the falls." In ironic reference to a supposedly daunting figure, Taggart instructs that Nick stands atop the step-ladder, where "in either hand he holds burning Roman Candle or Fourth-of-July sparkler."⁷²⁶ The canoe is displaced to other scenes. In one, again, Taggart's directions engineer the effect:

TELIE, ROLAND, EDITH and RALPH appear R.4E. in an Indian canoe. Ralph and Telie are 'paddling' while EDITH and ROLAND carry the canoe, which is a painted profile, held just above the ground row which hides their legs.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁵ I discuss this scene in chap. 2, 29.

⁷²⁶ Taggart, *Nick*, 61-63.

⁷²⁷ Taggart, *Nick*, 63.

(The quotation marks around *paddling* perform typographically the ironic distance of these revivals scenically.) Antebellum stage directions borrowed the readable style of fiction, dotted with technical stage positions, from which practitioners inferred the cause. Less trusting of the artists, Taggart's directions were entirely *directive*, explaining means and cause of effects, and engineering the comic mode through those means. The shift from implicit to explicit also affected music, one of the features that enhanced the yesteryear feel. Though nineteenth-century melodrama scripts rarely identified kinds of music, Taggart designates a tune for each major character, indicating the timing and quality of each (the romantic heroine is designated a minuet; Telie a melancholic air; Nathan "a lament"), and though interlude acts had never been scripted, he suggests songs such as "Shoo fly," urging, "keep them old."⁷²⁸ With historical accuracy, he emphasizes that interpolated songs could seem incongruent to the plot. Anachronistically, though, he calls these interludes by the vaudeville term "specialty," one of his translations of old practices into a contemporary idiom.

In another historical translation, Taggart describes Telie as a girl scout, invoking a familiar active type of young woman, while Edith should speak in a "sickeningly sweet" voice, invoking the trope of feminine heroine rife in popular culture. Gender alterations touched all dimensions of the playscript, fusing the parody of outmoded theatrical aesthetics and the satire of social ideology—since Taggart expressed a progressive vision only in relation to women and girls, not to ethnic minorities. In the cast, he arranged the ratio of men to women more evenly and visually positioned women parts above men's in the cast list. The modern gender revising extends to masculinity, as Taggart exaggerates the militarism of Roland (who salutes with a Nazi gesture), and in general demotes his manliness to buffoonery (by shaking, rather than kissing, the proffered hand of his beloved). Re-instating the sub-title *Or, Telie the Renegade's Daughter*

⁷²⁸ Taggart, *Nick*, 91.

from the New York premiere, the revised play enhances Telie's heroism by intermixing pieces of Haines's and Medina's versions: Telie frees Roland (Haines), and she dies in self-sacrifice (Medina). Taggart assigns the minor role of Little Tom to a girl, who would get to holler a "warwhoop," as girls in Proctor's career did not.⁷²⁹ (Although Little Tom had been performed by a girl during *Nick*'s later commercial stage career, this was an exotic novelty, not common practice.)⁷³⁰ Taggart elsewhere foregrounded active women characters, though it is worth noting that this inscription of youthful cross-dressing, by implication, foreclosed the cross-dressing of other roles. Amateur scripts often regulated the gender play they invited.

Outside the playtext, Taggart encased *Nick* with hefty explanatory paratext—as lengthy as the play itself—to instruct neophytes in how to present an outmoded play. For stage technology, Taggart encouraged not a re-creation of outmoded mechanics, as Jeannette Marks's program first tried to do, but rather a simulation, a surface illusion: "In front of the footlights, line up about twenty black rectangles of beaverboard *to give the effect* of the oil sconces once used," and then have a "lackey" enter and "pretend" to light them.⁷³¹ He emphasizes acting, complaining that self-conscious mockery of the work destroys the comic effect. Amid the contrivances, parody acting should, paradoxically, seem earnest, in this method. To edify sincerity, Taggart supplies historical information about nineteenth-century staging practices, some written by him (as in the permission to use anachronistic costumes), but another section reprinted from an 1850s guide, which refers to enacting emotion.⁷³² What had been an informal

⁷²⁹ Taggart, *Nick*, 47. The cry reads "Uoh! Uoh! Uoh!"

⁷³⁰ Taggart, *Nick*, 47. Girls played Young Tom Bruce on at least three instances: in New Orleans in 1849, according to the Cast of Characters/Production Table in Medina, *Nick* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, n/d, ca.1856); in 1861 in Portland, Maine, according to playbill, *Nick of the Woods*, Portland Theatre (ME), pasted in Bird, *Nick* (Philadelphia: Carey Lea & Blanchard, 1837), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; and in 1900 in Bowdoin Square Theatre, Boston—where the theatre offered a souvenir photograph of the girl—according to an advertisement, *Boston Journal* (Oct. 9, 1900), 5, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex.

⁷³¹ Taggart, "Setting the Stage," in *Nick*, 20 (emphasis added).

⁷³² The excerpt is from Lemman Thomas *Rede*, *The Guide to the Stage* (New York: Samuel French, 1856).

apprenticeship of theatre professionals, the acquisition of backstage practical knowledge transmitted in the workplace, became translated into didactic text for the uninitiated. Granted, such advice dated back to *Nick*'s commercial career in amateur how-to guides, but now it *enveloped* a single play and aimed for a parody of the work. The manual combined with the playscript rendered the document into a "book," as both writer and publisher called it.

Taggart guides not only the show on stage, but the entire event: promotion, program, space, and audience response. He supplies a prop list for each act, publicity blurbs (describing *Nick* as "a genuine piece of American folklore"),⁷³³ the "synopsis" (a telegraphic list of key moments, an element on old posters and programs), and scene diagrams. Modeling the playbill, he reprints the one used for his Cleveland production, which announces in folksy idiom, "Segars [cigars] prohibited." This misspelling expresses the parody's overall historical attitude, as a fictive rather than realistic simulacrum of old culture. That refraction is sometimes overt, yet sometimes unrecognized. For "colorful" ambiance in the house, Taggart recommends that ushers dress in period costume and that one member impersonate an old-style policeman on surveillance. The mock proscenium structure should be decorated by "hideous gold tassels" on the curtain⁷³⁴—the gold tassel now anathema to modern middle-class theatre. The re-construction extends into audience response, maneuvered by planting viewers ready to hiss and boo and by passing out lyric sheets to guide singing along—though at the same time Taggart warns that producers have to contain the audience's exuberant responses.

In guiding such a tempered, irreverent reconstruction, Taggart's version partly promotes a serious, almost studious, engagement with history. It teaches about nineteenth-century theatre in general (audience, print culture, and acting), reprints a primary source excerpt, and retraces the

⁷³³ Taggart, *Nick*, 96.

⁷³⁴ Taggart, *Nick*, 21.

play's genealogy, quoting an excerpt from historian George Odell's reconstruction of the play—the same source used by current scholars.⁷³⁵ These paratexts seem superfluous to practical necessity, as if the book strains to do more than guide a lighthearted production. Indeed, Taggart's oeuvre expresses, if ambivalently, his learnedness (characters in his other 1940 play discuss a bibliography of regional history).⁷³⁶ Alongside its effort toward scholastic accuracy, though, the repackaging rearranges *Nick*'s history. The play's catalogue date of 1839, signifying the year of the play's premiere, seems to refer instead to the time of the play-world (jumping ahead a half century), while the promotional introduction promises that the script retains “all the picturesque flavor of a ‘gay nineties’ production” (jumping ahead a half century, again).⁷³⁷ While analogizing that the novel was “the *Gone with the Wind* of its day,”⁷³⁸ Taggart identifies the author as “Richard” M. Bird, an error reproduced on library catalogue cards for the play. He buries his attribution to Medina and Haines deep within these paratexts, but for this datum, diligent librarians excavated her name and promoted it over his (and over Haines's), in catalogues and on the New York Public Library copy I consulted.⁷³⁹ This uneven historiography, though, presumably did not impede the flow of the publisher sales or stage production.

Patrons could find *Nick* stocked in libraries or in the drama bookstores that had arisen in major cities, or they could order *Nick* from Samuel French offices through third class postal rates for print matter. Taggart's *Nick* was marketed through Samuel French catalogues for at least a decade in the US, during which time a new director took charge and the company, still separated from the British counterpart, became incorporated. The Second World War did not, as far as I

⁷³⁵ Taggart, “Historical Note,” in *Nick*, 82-3.

⁷³⁶ Taggart, *Grandma Fought the Indians* (New York: Samuel French, 1940), 25. The town mayor is not sure what “bibliography” refers to: “Oh, you mean that list of books for the library.”

⁷³⁷ Samuel French, *1940 Catalogue*; Taggart, *Nick*, 17.

⁷³⁸ Taggart, *Nick*, 82.

⁷³⁹ Taggart, *Nick*, 82, 96. The table of contents in the New York Public Library volume attributes *Nick* to Medina.

can discern, constrain US play publication, though it did constrict all publishing in the UK while impinging on regular books in the US (where imprints declared themselves, “A Wartime Book....produced in full compliance with the government’s regulations for conserving paper”).⁷⁴⁰ In fact wars still boosted the consumption of playbooks by the military, which consulted librarians and drama lists for troop entertainment—though its selections are difficult to identify (through civilian resources).⁷⁴¹ Under another division of the government, Taggart’s edition became the sole version of *Nick* held in the Library of Congress, the federal counterpart of a college’s special collections, where cataloguers classified it as “Frontier and Pioneer life – Kentucky – drama,” and not as a melodrama parody.

Taggart and Media

Beyond *Nick of the Woods*, Thomas Bernard Taggart’s entire oeuvre resonates with the themes of this chapter, for its unmistakable foregrounding of media and entertainment in old and new forms. Though he did seem to have tested regular theatre in New York City, he became a rather prolific writer for amateur theatre, publishing over forty-five short and longer plays across the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, most issued with Samuel French, besides others through smaller houses. He saw six titles into print in 1940, alongside *Nick*. In varying ways and combinations, many of these refer to theatre and commercial mass entertainment media. Much of his work is theatrically inter-textual, often evoking Shakespeare, most blatantly in the punning titles *The Clay’s the Thing*, *TV or Not TV*, and *The Merchant of Venison*, the character of a “seedy Shakespearean tragedian” in a revue format, and a skit in which “Miss Speare” leads a college Shakespeare

⁷⁴⁰ The clause is found on, e.g., Kingdon S. Tyler, *Modern Radio* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944). On war-time printing, see Beth Luey, “Modernity and Print III,” in Eliot and Rose, *A Companion to the History of the Book*, (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 368-380.

⁷⁴¹ Hisz, “History of the Theatre Collection,” 31-32. Hisz’s reference is brief, and studies of military drama are scant. Nor have I learned whether plays were included in defense department book programs.

reading.⁷⁴² Taggart drew material from other textual genres, dramatizing an Oscar Wilde story and *Hans Brinker*, the uplifting Dutch ice-skater story.⁷⁴³ Riding the nostalgia wave, he also dramatized a dime novel detective series into a revue scaffold, *Deadwood Dick; or, The Game of Gold! A Rootin' Tootin' Melodrama of the Gay '90s*.⁷⁴⁴ By allusion or adaptation, he integrated erudite and popular culture forms.

While trafficking in nostalgia, Taggart incorporated modern technology and media as both a symbol and a practical device. He recommended using sound effects recordings—another publisher product—and put radios on stage as part of the *mise en scène*.⁷⁴⁵ He advised *Nick* producers to copy song lyrics via mimeography, the small-scale technology apparently so prevalent that he did not need to indicate where one might find a machine. Given its familiarity, mimeography even became a theatrical subject: one skit centers on an assistant's bungling the stencil process, accidentally reversing the word-order of characters' lines in a stock melodrama (which, when the actors read it as it appears on the page, turns out nonetheless comprehensible—whence the humor).⁷⁴⁶

Across his career, while he continued to foreground theatricality, Taggart referred increasingly to mass media, as it increased in the world around him. His *Grandma Fought the Indians*, one of his 1940 titles, satirizes movie industry greed, movie house gimmicks, and film celebrity aura, in a plot that pits a Hollywood frontier film against one small-town old woman's memories. (It also illustrates his blithe disregard for Indian concerns.) In reverse remediation, he dramatized a television show, *Dear Phoebe*, which foregrounded print media in conjunction with

⁷⁴² Taggart, *Short and Sweet: Monologues, Sketches, Blackouts, and Burlesques for Stage and Television* (New York: Samuel French, 1956); Taggart, *Gaslight Gaieties* (New York: Samuel French, 1949).

⁷⁴³ *New York Times* (March 7, 1940), 26; Taggart, *Hans Brinker* (New York: Samuel French, 1964). Taggart is not credited for the televised *Hans Brinker* drama around the same era. The Wilde story was “Canterville Ghost.”

⁷⁴⁴ Taggart, *Deadwood Dick* (New York: Samuel French, 1964).

⁷⁴⁵ Taggart, *The Late Mr. Early* (New York: Samuel French, 1940). Both its set and sound involve a radio.

⁷⁴⁶ Taggart, “Reverse Language,” in *Skits and Blackouts for Men Only* (New York: Samuel French, 1941).

gender: a man English professor writes an advice column under a woman's name.⁷⁴⁷ Ten years after his *Nick of the Woods*, mass media took central place in Taggart's *TV or Not TV*, a comedy highlighting the falsity of broadcast drama—especially the *writing* of those dramas. When an all-American Midwestern family awaits a visit from a New York television scriptwriter, cousin Melville, their conversation touches kinds of writing (“Not books; Melville writes plays”), canon drama (Shakespeare and Ibsen), and earning a “fortune” from plays turned into film (invoking *Tobacco Road*).⁷⁴⁸ This jostling of high-brow and middle-brow theatre with mass media is typical. In *TV or Not TV*, though, the television itself appears only in cameo, in an unusually experimental meta-drama scene: the dramatist composes his script on a typewriter, while the cast (in dream-sequence style) enacts his script-in-progress—and that vision revolves around a broken television set, while the ostensibly “real” situation centers on the typewriter. In Taggart's media-scape, mass media offer a thematic foil against which live theatre—including or especially amateur production—stands out as the privileged, innocent medium. Amateur theatre corresponds geographically to the Midwest, which appears as the authentic region, in contrast to mass entertainment centers, Hollywood or New York (despite or because of Taggart's own experience in New York). The antidote to false, coastal metropolis television script-writing in *TV or Not TV* comes from the Midwestern woman director of a non-profit youth theatre; she is “modernizing” Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll House*, starring the family's teen daughter (who, while lightly ridiculed for pretension, appears more admirable than the narcissistic, past-prime screen actress). The amateur endeavor, the fictive version of the real kind for which Taggart wrote, seems virtuous and culturally meaningful, relative to the high-technology, profit-seeking

⁷⁴⁷ Tom Taggart and James Reach, *Dear Phoebe* (New York: Samuel French, 1956).

⁷⁴⁸ Taggart, *TV or Not TV* (New York: Samuel French, 1955), 8.

productions of mass media, over which those outside the industry had no effect.⁷⁴⁹

Taggart's work manifests, *writ small*, the manifold responses—ambivalent, resentful, amused, or inspired—of modern amateur theatre to mass entertainment media. A Samuel French company retrospective essay recalled the publisher's worry that the “bogeyman” television would eclipse amateur theatre, but concludes that on the contrary, television likely boosted low-budget theatre (by exposing viewers to quality drama).⁷⁵⁰ Amateur theatre seems to have developed not despite, but partly *because of* mass entertainment media, thriving in its shadow. The means to dominant, popular narrative—recording, radio, moving picture—lay beyond the reach of small groups. By low-budget theatre, middle-class non-artists could produce narrative in a medium that resembled its prominent counterpart (whether commercial, art, avant-garde, canon drama, or old melodrama), and they could do so as a social activity; indeed, that sociality was often the true function of the project. A mainstream, do-it-yourself cultural movement, amateur theatre was the only medium suitable for textual, embodied, narrative entertainment on an affordable scale, before the advent of small video cameras enabled an analogous approximation of film. Though Taggart's *Nick* did not directly refer to mass media, the play nonetheless assumed an interesting position: while the tropes of white-Indian frontier conflict appeared abundantly in all media, the specific story of *Nick* never appeared on film or US television, so the amateur version allowed echoes of mass media—for the pleasure of mimicking or maligning it—yet with a plot unique (it could seem) to the traditions of the accessible medium, theatre.

Low-Profile Theatre

Taggart's *Nick*, with the tides of other publications from Samuel French and specialty houses, did explicitly target amateur theatre productions. But not all projects that mounted *Nick*

⁷⁴⁹ Taggart, *TV or Not TV*.

⁷⁵⁰ Samuel French, *Truly Yours: French's the House for Plays, 1830-1980* (New York: Samuel French, 1980), 6.

or that parodied outmoded melodrama can be classified as *amateur*, which remains imprecise as nomenclature. As she criticizes its neglect in scholarship, Claire Cochrane explains amateur (via its etymology in *love*) as projects where participants commit time and “creative energy” in a chosen pastime, “often out of psychic or emotional need which is separate from the economic imperative.”⁷⁵¹ But the category has yet to undergo rigorous debate and clarification, since, as Cochrane concludes about Great Britain, “the full extent of the history has not been chronicled, let alone subjected to analytic scrutiny,”⁷⁵² a lack seen equally, if not more, in the US. The instances of *Nick* productions leak beyond even Cochrane’s loose definition of amateur, suggesting the need for a more elaborate terminology to cover the wide spectrum of less prominent theatre, by which I mean small-scale, usually low-budget productions outside the kinds more obvious to theatre-goers and also to scholars: capital-intensive, for-profit projects (Broadway), or those designated avant-garde or art theatre (which encompass a range of economic levels). *Nick* was mounted, according to records, by a youth group, a college, several independent adult organizations, and a peripheral professional company, while it feasibly could have been staged in high schools, college clubs, or on military bases. The variable of free choice is complicated in any instances involving youth and soldiers, while the “economic imperative” that Cochrane precludes does come to the fore in self-supporting artistic projects.

How were these types defined in the era itself? Milton Smith, one of the era’s chief drama list compilers in the US, iterated diverse kinds under the rubric of “non-commercial”: “little theatres, semi-professional stock companies, schools, churches, colleges and community organizations of all sorts,” along with drama as a part of school extension projects, women’s

⁷⁵¹ Cochrane, “The Pervasiveness of the Commonplace: The Historian and Amateur Theatre,” *Theatre Research International* 26, no. 3 (2001): 234, doi: 10.1017/S0307883301000323.

⁷⁵² Cochrane, “Amateur Theatre,” 236.

clubs, pageants, and festivals.⁷⁵³ Publishers, too, advanced their own boundaries, in order to schedule the exchange rate for playbooks and stage rights, as when Samuel French catalogues qualified, “the phrase ‘No royalty’ in this catalogue refers only to strictly amateur performances,” precluding “the use of these plays in vaudeville, on chautauqua [sic] circuits, or to radio broadcasting.” Catalogues did not, though, *define* the term in question, and even their delineation is questionable, when radio and vaudeville were appropriated for non-profit contexts in schools and clubs. Another publisher stipulation refers to *low-budget*, in the offer of *French’s Budget Plays* intended “to meet the requirements of limited finances”—though a limited budget does not necessarily make a production amateur.

The significance of *amateur* derives, it seems, from two main features: financial exchange (expense of mounting, ticket price, box office take, remuneration for workers, and destination of profits); and performers’ credentials, or what Cochrane categorizes as professionalism. Yet neither variable is simple. When amateur productions earn substantially—an 1873 *Nick* production in a Baptist church alleged to have drawn over 100 dollars⁷⁵⁴—clearly the *route* of profits, not the amount, marks the distinction. But the boundary between “charity or gain” is hardly solid, as sundry fundraising scandals remind us. The second theme that categorizes amateur, acting skill, also lacks precision, since professionals worked alongside amateurs (as did Proctor in his late-life instructor career), and some non-professionals had substantial training (as did seniors in Marks’s college lab). The diverse revivals of *Nick* invite clearer delineations of such marginal theatre projects, an array that runs from large institutions—military and school—to small, independent, civilian groups, with some in-between instances, as

⁷⁵³ Milton Smith, *Guide to Play Selection*; Milton Smith, introduction to *Dramatic Bibliography*, comp. Blanche M. Baker (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1933), vi.

⁷⁵⁴ George F. Bareis, *The History of Madison Township* (Canal Winchester, OH: G. F. Bareis, 1902), 147, accessed April 11, 2008, Google Books, www.books.google.com.

when the Ohio group staged *Nick* in 1954 after sprouting off of the YWCA.⁷⁵⁵ Cochrane notes that even prestigious professional organizations, such as the Irish Abbey Theatre, evolved from amateur projects, while national radio continued to interact with amateur theatre in Scotland—and the phenomenon of amateur/marginal theatre is especially important in “small countries,” or provincial regions.⁷⁵⁶ Rather than “amateur,” or the muddy modifier “community,” my analysis here is better served by “low-profile,” “low-budget” or “marginal,” labels that signal a distance from more visible theatre, in either commercial or aesthetic terms, while still encompassing several levels of financial exchange and expertise. Whatever their species, though, these types of theatre all leave a weaker record than commercial theatre did a century before them.

Periphery Parody Revivals

One instance of low-profile theatre did serendipitously turn up in my research, which seems distinct in particular details but also representative of a mid-century US trend in general. Dark Horse Theatre worked on a modest budget at the edge of Estes State Park in Colorado, producing revivals of outmoded plays for tourists; in high parody, they staged *Nick of the Woods*, retitled *The Tender Tale of Telie Doe; Or, The Indian Maiden's Revenge* in 1960.⁷⁵⁷ The company's former art and technical director, Greig Steiner, responded affably to my email queries (dispatched after I spotted his curriculum vitae on a World Wide Web search), generously supplementing his written recollections with copies of the playscript and photographs excavated from his archives and sent by paper mail.

Insofar as he explains the company's choice of *Nick*, Steiner couches it as part of the trend of parody revivals, alongside the favorite temperance titles and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The

⁷⁵⁵ Trumbull New Theatre, Niles, Ohio, website, accessed October 10, 2009, www.trumbullnewtheatre.com.

⁷⁵⁶ Cochrane, “Amateur Theatre,” 236, 238.

⁷⁵⁷ Jerry Carlson and Greig Steiner, *The Tender Tale of Telie Doe; or, The Indian Maiden's Revenge*, photocopy of TS, personal papers, Greig Steiner, Estes, Colorado.

parody tone did not prevent Dark Horse Theatre from reviving the original quality of melodrama: “*The Drunkard* we did for all the pathos and bathos available,” so effectively that “the crowd would be in tears at the end.” The company’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, according to Steiner, had “people standing in the aisles...singing the Battle Hymn of the Republic...weeping at the death of Little Nell,” while preserving the tradition of offending Dixie: “a lot of southerners got up in a rage and walked out.”⁷⁵⁸ Steiner summarizes the old plays as “Good stuff *when played correctly*”⁷⁵⁹—a reminder that they were sometimes played incorrectly, hence that mockery requires skill, as Taggart had noted twenty years before.

The Dark Horse Players, as Steiner recalls them, took a lighthearted approach to their art (“A fun time was had by all”), though he balances the levity with cultural *gravitas*, adding that they staged “a lot of classics,” and that during winters he worked for the Pasadena Playhouse, a “closed circuit TV station,” and “the first theatre in the round in the US,” in the Los Angeles area.⁷⁶⁰ Even if the productions were “very folksy,” they would not be classified amateur. In schedule, Dark Horse ran a nine-week season, launching a new play every week, and in skill, members had some degree of training, with the company offering classes and lectures for “student actors.” Two dozen “locals” took on extra parts.⁷⁶¹ Dark Horse productions were marked by low-budget ethos, which it seems to have embraced, in Steiner’s hindsight. Different from the narrow job descriptions of conventional theatre, here, the artists wore several hats. Grieg Steiner created sets, co-wrote the script, and acted, playing the role of the Indian Chief in *Nick*. He recalls his multifaceted participation: “I designed, built, painted and lighted all the shows,” while choreographing and dancing (in musicals and “olios”), explaining matter-of-factly,

⁷⁵⁸ Steiner, email to author, May 16, 2009.

⁷⁵⁹ Steiner, email to author, May 16, 2009 (emphasis added).

⁷⁶⁰ Steiner, email, op cite.

⁷⁶¹ Grieg Steiner, TS letter to author, n.d., ca. June, 2009.

“Well, everyone had to act as well except for the publicity director.” The company members themselves constructed theatre space from a roller-skating rink (a boon for its hardwood floors), itself converted from a defunct outdoor public swimming pool (from which they inherited changing rooms); the pool had been closed by the government in response to 1940s polio epidemics (an instance of the state’s indirect influence on cultural production). Dark Horse Theatre worked by the make-do tactic of *bricolage*, both physically and textually.

Dark Horse’s location influenced the transformation of the play, since, as entertainment for State Park tourists, *Nick* “was really re-written to include local characters from the early days of the Rocky Mountain National Park and vicinity,” creating a “tongue-in-cheek history of the area” or pseudo-history, in his terms.⁷⁶² (Taggart had advised substituting such localisms.) The gallant, Roland, announces that they have traveled from Denver, the first of several non-Kentucky places that dot the script, while characters are re-named to mesh with local history: the maiden Edith becomes world-traveler Isadora Byrd (who wrote about the Rocky Mountains), while Colonel Bruce and Roland are renamed for men associated with the state park. The avenging Nick/Jibbenainosay figure is transplanted onto a bird, the Ouzel, a non-human figure in local legend, and even the pivotal prop, the legal will, gets transmogrified into a government land deed. In Dark Horse’s localizing the story and generalizing melodrama, the specificity of the Kentucky frontier dissipates. Yet place figures in the *context* of the theatre, in a location not central to the state of Colorado and far from centers of entertainment in any media. One important feature of low-budget revivals is that they could happen in cultural peripheries; the trend was not dependent on proximity to theatre centers (as was the avant-garde). Low-budget revival, and parody that accommodated local allusions, suited the context.

⁷⁶² Steiner, email to author, May 10, 2009 and May 15, 2009.

This kind of revival drastically rewrote *Nick* from the title to the finale, rather than leave the original structures intact, as Taggart's script did. Steiner does not recall the play's basis, remembering vaguely that his co-writer Jerry Carlson "got the story from a friend who was involved in the theatre program at the University of Nebraska" (a later instance of the theatre-university links discussed before). Fragments of Taggart's edition peek out, but given the drastic transformations, they appear only as in a palimpsest. The typescript fills just seventeen typed pages, the events compacted by syncopating formerly separate scenes (the Chief joins the evil white men's strategizing), and by cutting liberally. Dark Horse reduced the central character Nathan to a smaller role, dropping the etiology of his blood-thirst, the Chief's past massacre of his family. The avenger, now a bird, "wrecks his vengeance" (in his own words) as a kind of generic guardian angel, striking anyone wicked, Indian or white. As the plot unfolds, a square dance suddenly materializes. The canoe scene, abbreviated to "canoe bit" in the script, is discernible by a low-resolution photograph and its caption: Telie, "paddling her own canoe," sits between Roland, who gesticulates rather than paddle, and (by my inference) Ralph, before the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. Roland's tight grasp of the canoe gunwale suggests that the prop is actually a long board (decorated with stick-figure animals). Decentering from Nick of the Woods, "the most famous scene," Steiner recalls, featured Telie receiving the bullet aimed at Roland, an episode inherited from Medina's version, but rewritten as the finale. The curtain line, in the style of old comedies but not old *Nick* scripts, recites the play title: "This was *The Tender Tale of Telie Doe*."⁷⁶³

Dark Horse's sub-title, "Or, the Indian Maiden's Revenge" invokes a long-running trope of tragic, *actual* Indian woman figures (though Telie is white, as the supposed daughter of a white-turned-Indian). In its pentimento style, the Dark Horse parody is the first version to alter

⁷⁶³ Steiner, email to author, May 15, 2009; Carlson and Steiner, *Telie Doe*, 17.

the representation of Indians. The shift from Taggart's contented bigotry to Dark Horse Theatre's mitigated portrait of Indians reflects a larger cultural shift, one summarized by a book historian: "It was still possible to hold openly racist views in polite society in 1945, but much more rare by 1965."⁷⁶⁴ The shift shows in Chief Watapottomi, as Dark Horse renamed him, who becomes the only Indian man, although his wife makes a cameo appearance in the last scene (when all characters assemble and speak). In Bird's novel, the chief's widow attacks whites after Nathan kills Wenonga, but in 1960, the "squaw" berates the Chief in a housewife's litany: "Ain't been home for three days...out with the braves, while I stay at home in an old hot teepee."⁷⁶⁵ As poetic justice, hen-pecking replaces the Indian man's execution by whites.

The ethnic parody reaches *ways* of speaking, as well. The Chief himself mainly utters the monosyllabic lexemes now associated with plains tribes—"Ugh" or "How"—but mid-play, he suddenly launches a speech that begins with a comment about Indian linguistics: "Gentlemen. I am but a poor inarticulate Indian, yet let me point out to you that the lexicon of our race provides several interesting methods of execution,"⁷⁶⁶ after which he resorts to his mainstay, "Ugh" (as in the section in appendix S). These monosyllables were never uttered in earlier versions of *Nick*, and Taggart's revision emphasized not their words but their *things*—scalps (which he explains how to simulate) and tomahawk (which he does not explain, apparently presuming that it belonged in any boy's toy-chest).⁷⁶⁷ "Ugh" is not inherited from the lineage of *Nick*, but rather imported from other cultural tropes in the mass-media era, reinforced indirectly by anthropological scholarship.

⁷⁶⁴ Michael Schudson, "General Introduction," in *The Enduring Book: Print Culture in PostWar America*, ed. David Paul Nord, Joan Shelley Rubin, and Michael Schudson, vol. 5 of *The Book in America* (Chapel Hill: American Antiquarian Society/University of North Carolina, 2009), 12.

⁷⁶⁵ Carlson and Steiner, *Telie Doe*, 17.

⁷⁶⁶ Carlson and Steiner, *Telie Doe*, 12.

⁷⁶⁷ Taggart promotes the play for its "war whoops, scalps, and tomahawks," preface to *Nick*, 3; and provides instructions for skull caps and scalps, "Description of Characters" in *Nick*, 13.

This linguistic or meta-lingual humor extends beyond Indian discourse. The script increases characters' "aside" comments, that pre-modern mode of voicing inner thought. As another way to signal antiquated language, Roland says the Elizabethan "methinks," while Telie interweaves Latin in her poetics, "Sic semper tyrannus. (et cetera)." Such ludic language colors stage directions themselves, as when Isadora "screams muchly," or when, after Braxley says, "And now to reconnoiter," the stage directions read, "Reconnoitering their way to Roland."⁷⁶⁸ This humor, not audible to audiences, remains a backstage joke; it can be seen as an instance of the self-referential stage directions characteristic of the "radical" phase of playtext history, according to a 1980s Marxist semiotic study (if we extend their observation about the serious avant-garde to provincial parody).⁷⁶⁹ This revelry in verbs does get projected aloud, too. In a scene where the evil white men conspire, Doe begs to *skulk* alongside his cohorts, a request Braxley rejects:

BRAXLEY: Silence....You must slink—slink with your savage brothers...slink, I say...slink (*Song*)
ABEL: Geez, I'm sorry boss...so I'll slink (*Jewish*).⁷⁷⁰

(The passage appears in appendix S.) While satirizing old theatricality, the exchange invokes mass media tropes. Braxley's "slink, I say, slink" echoes popular depictions of villain-speak. For Abel's acquiescence, the modifier "Jewish" signals an intonation familiar from vaudeville or film. (About the social etiquette of the term, I infer that Stein feels distant from the concerns of identity politics, which in 1960 had not yet ascended.)⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁸ Carlson and Steiner, *Telie Doe*, 10.

⁷⁶⁹ Elaine Aston and George Savona, *Theatre as Sign System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1980), 93-95.

⁷⁷⁰ Carlson and Steiner, *Telie Doe*, 4. Ellipses in original.

⁷⁷¹ In email exchanges, my mention of *Nick's* distasteful representation of Native American Indians provoked Stein's disgruntled recollection of some hostile audience responses to a blackface production; theatrical race play for him is politically and socially innocent fun.

Taggart's and Dark Horse Theatre's versions suggest that the parody of old plays derives less from direct encounter with outmoded theatre, and more from triangulation across multiple media: Indians from cowboy films, heroines from comic strips, heroes from radio drama, and didactic morals from school plays, *inter alia*. The frontier persevered in new media, popularizing the Indian's monosyllabic "Ugh" and "How" to the repertoire. Taggart refers to "the recent epidemic of big historical western pictures" in his notes to his farce about the movie industry, *Grandma Fought the Indians*.⁷⁷² On television, the "Western" drama, emblemized in *Gun-Smoke* and *Bonanza*, endured as a popular sub-genre from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s.⁷⁷³ The twirling moustache (in Taggart's and Dark Horse's scripts), or phrases such as "Curses! Foiled again!" (in Dark Horse's)—these staples of melodrama villainy never belonged to *Nick of the Woods*, but, to a modern audience, would have seemed natural there. The conflation was hardly new. Decades earlier, an 1890s novel had described a boy's trip to a New York theatre, where *Nick's* hero "escaped being run over by a real locomotive, or in turn rescued the stout heroine from six red shirted cowboys"—a medley of melodrama tropes transplanted from other dramas onto *Nick*.⁷⁷⁴ For our historiography, the perpetuation of melodrama at all strata is more comprehensible in view of the full compass of media and entertainment, rather within a genealogy of a single medium.

Twentieth-Century Backstage Playscripts

The Dark Horse players composed and typed the new *Nick* script as a workaday document, streamlined and minimalist for its short-term function (see appendix S). Typewritten on standard typing paper, the script lacks a title page or by-line, skips preliminaries (e.g., a cast

⁷⁷² Taggart, *Grandma Fought the Indians*, 86.

⁷⁷³ Philip J. Lane, "Television Entertainment," *History of the Mass Media in the United States: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret A. Blanchard (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998), 639-43.

⁷⁷⁴ Richard Harding Davis, *Van Bibber and Others* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1903), chap. 8, Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11019>.

list), and has no diagrams or stage position acronyms (at least in the copy provided to me). A master copy, it contains the full dialogue, character names justified at the right (print style, not regular rehearsal style); it bears few prompt cues, rare light commands (besides one special effect for the Ouzel bird), and a handwritten note to suspend a question mark symbol over Roland's contemplative head (evoking yet another popular medium, the comic strip).⁷⁷⁵ Physical comedy is not described but truncated to "business"—"business of sneaking about"⁷⁷⁶—a memorandum that performers would expand themselves. The document's identity as a workaday script is manifest: the typist confused *Isadora* with *Isabella*, an error which, although some hand redacted some instances of it later, scarcely mattered, since *Isa-* suffices for backstage reading, whatever the suffix. Just as what Steiner calls the play's "corny language" was "mitigated during rehearsals," the performance qualities were elaborated in stage work, without being fixed in the playscript—a procedure more akin to the process of antebellum theatre, in fact, than was Mount Holyoke's studious reconstruction or Taggart's simulacrum. Insofar as they memorized scripted lines, Dark Horse actors likely received copies duplicated by carbon paper (since mimeography served large jobs, and photocopy machines had not yet pervaded society). In most aspects, *Tender Tale* resembles thousands of transient jobbing playscripts, except perhaps that it persevered. Steiner stayed in the Estes area, outfitted with an office and files (to which his email messages referred), and he harbored warm memories of Dark Horse Theatre—factors that facilitated the materials' safekeeping. In this instance, script and photographs became an archive.

Typewriting and Theatre

By 1960, typewriting had been integrated in theatre work for over half a century, incurring the most significant transformation to the handling of the playscript in the post-gaslight

⁷⁷⁵ Carlson and Steiner, *Telie Doe*, 15.

⁷⁷⁶ Carlson and Steiner, *Telie Doe*, 9.

era. First permeating the business sphere by the late 1880s, typewriting was swiftly incorporated into stage production in the English-speaking world. An 1890 London writer noted sardonically that theatre “daily and nightly invokes the blessing of all the gods upon the inventors of typewriting.”⁷⁷⁷ Theatres and play brokers hired in-house typists, or superimposed the task on existing jobs, or contracted typing firms, which were proliferating in urban centers. As typing became acceptable as labor for middle-class women, this new kind of worker staffed and even ran these firms. (One of the long-running London outfits was run by Charles Dickens’s granddaughter, Miss Ethel Dickens.)⁷⁷⁸ The young woman typist, given her pioneering position in urban office work, became a recurring figure in drama and silent film, whether tragic or comic; more recently, she has become a subject in social history.⁷⁷⁹

Typing permeated theatre. Publishers rented plays in typescript (though calling them “manuscript”). Typewriting mixed with handwriting (as well as with sketches and print) in the nexus of backstage means of production texts, an array expanded beyond scripts to light plots, contracts, and others documents—these now bound by brass clasps and eventually staples, rather than thread stitches. Typists duplicated documents using carbon paper (which was developed in the wake of the typewriter, before 1900). When actors still used parts rather than playbooks, these were typed individually, often still in the old half-booklet format; a 1950s theatre glossary defined the actor’s part by the medium, as “typewritten lines.”⁷⁸⁰ Typing became integral to theatre’s means of production. Play publishers, aware of the practice, stipulated that to obtain a

⁷⁷⁷ Edward Aveling, “Type-writers and Writers,” *Time* (London), December, 1890, 1322, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, Gale.

⁷⁷⁸ “Dramatic Gossip,” *The Athenaeum*, February 19, 1887, 266, British Periodicals, ProQuest. The column reports the new firm of Miss Ethel Dickens and Miss Farren, “more especially for the copying of parts and prompt-books.” Other women’s firms’ advertisements abound in *fin de siècle* periodicals, albeit more in the UK than the US.

⁷⁷⁹ Lawrence S. Rainey, “Pretty Typewriters, Melodramatic Modernity: Edna, Belle and Estelle,” *Modernism/Modernity* 16, no. 1 (January 2009): 105-122, ProQuest Research Library, ISSN 10716068. Rainey analyzes the typist figure in drama.

⁷⁸⁰ Wilfred Granville, *Dictionary of Theatre Terms* (London: A. Deutsch, 1952), 133.

legitimate license, theatre producers were obligated to purchase multiple copies: “The copying, either of separate parts of the whole or this work by any process whatsoever, is forbidden by law and subject to the penalties prescribed by Section 28 of the Copyright Law, in force July 1, 1909.”⁷⁸¹

After digital technology pervaded textual work in the 1990s, the declining phenomenon of typewriting provoked commentary. Much of the scholarly writing on it emphasizes theoretical post-structural concerns for culture, power, and discourse, as well as the body in relation to the machine, or analyze the materiality of literary experiment. Less addressed is the question of how typewriting was refracted in one field, as theatre harnessed it, or how it functioned for the humdrum task of copying, as in the case of backstage scripts.⁷⁸² Nonetheless, the assertion in the landmark study *Iron Whim* that, “for much of the last two centuries, typewriting *was* writing”⁷⁸³ does resonate in the life of English-language playscripts. The era of mass entertainment media described in this chapter was also the era of typewritten playscripts, which crossed the arenas of theatre, radio, film, and television. With carbon paper or mimeography or photocopiers, typewriting enabled the workers who handled scripts, drama lists, or any documents in the nexus of theatre documents to produce multiple, quasi-uniform copies—a small scale, affordable reproduction of texts. A dramatist for the BBC grudgingly recalled the corporation’s duplication process: “In the days before computers, I delivered my script—a top copy and two carbons, as laid down in the contract. It was then retyped and duplicated by the broadcasting companies,

⁷⁸¹ Samuel French, copyright clause on *Gaslight Gaieties*, comp. and ed. Taggart (New York: Samuel French, 1949).

⁷⁸² Bernhard Siegert, *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*, trans. Kevin Repp (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), chap. 19. Siegert does refer to a woman’s typewriter copying, though his analysis centers on how her labor provoked textual/erotic jealousy in Franz Kafka, and how he expressed himself through typing.

⁷⁸³ Darren Wershler-Henry, *Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 16.

who had typing pools.”⁷⁸⁴ On different scales, the processes were shared in theatre, radio, and television.

Nick of the Woods on Public Television

In the summer of 1965, the British Broadcasting Corporation cultural channel, BBC2, aired *Nick* as one episode of *Gaslight Theatre*, “a series of six nineteenth-century melodramas presented in the spirit of the Victorian theatre.”⁷⁸⁵ The BBC refashioned *Nick*’s title more drastically than ever into *The Blood-Craz’d Scourge of the Redskin Wilderness; or, What You Will*. (My Internet search retrieved it by one character name, not the title.) The episode, third in the series, represented one sub-genre, the American frontier, amid a colorful spectrum of types: *The Worst Woman of London* (the urban fallen woman); *The Drunkard; or The Sins of the Parents Shall be Visited Upon the Child* (temperance); *Britons to the Rescue; or, English Virtue Preserved in South America* (British imperialism and perhaps nautical melodrama); *Sweeney Todd* (horror); and *Maria Marten; or, The Red Barn Murder* (a ripped-from-the-headlines crime story).

As manifest in the cases of *Taggart* and *Dark Horse*, these plays and their ilk were still circulating. *Dark Horse* Players also staged *Sweeney Todd*, which saw diverse reincarnations in theatre and print (before the refined 1979 Broadway musical version);⁷⁸⁶ *Maria Marten* had been remediated into both silent and talkie films;⁷⁸⁷ while *The Drunkard* topped at least the US roster of parody favorites. Anthologies reprinted them, as my next chapter explains. The BBC series title, *Gaslight Theatre*, echoed the revival trend in low-budget theatre and its commercial

⁷⁸⁴ Alan Plater, “Learning the Facts of Life: Forty Years as a TV Dramatist,” *New Theatre Quarterly*, 19, no.3 (August 2003): 211, ProQuest, doi: 10.1017/S0266464X03000113. 203-13

⁷⁸⁵ “The Blood-Craz’d Scourge of the Redskin Wilderness or, What You Will,” episode 3, *Gaslight Theatre*, BBC TV, August 21, 1965, British Film Inst. Film and TV Database, accessed May 3, 2009, <http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk>.

⁷⁸⁶ Daniel Gerould, “A Toddography,” in *Melodrama*, ed. Daniel C. Gerould (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980), chap. 4.

⁷⁸⁷ *Maria Marten; or, The Murder in the Red Barn*, writer and dir. Maurice Elvey, Motograph (UK), 1913; and writer Randall Faye, dir. Milton Rosmer, George King Productions (UK), 1935.

playscripts corollaries, including its near-fetishistic symbol of gaslight (rather than, say, curtains or ticket price). Given England's scores of dramatic societies related to "schools, training colleges, universities, factories, offices, Her Majesty's Services, youth clubs, churches, and women's organizations," according to a 1960s article defending such "avocational" theatre, some parodies were doubtless part of what Cochrane called the "pervasive commonplace" of amateur or alternative theatre, and hence may have influenced television programming.⁷⁸⁸

Where did old melodrama fit in to public television? BBC ran a parallel public channel (BBC1), but other channels aired competing commercial programming—shows interrupted by, and funded by, advertising—since the state monopoly had been ruptured years before.⁷⁸⁹ This competition may have influenced BBC programmers toward, so to speak, lower-brow fare. As happened with radio in the US, tensions over programming content reflected the map of cultural categories. In a history of the station, Asa Briggs cites a report that recalled the early administrators' confident policies, or "paternalism," that imposed a uniform, high-brow culture.⁷⁹⁰ Moreover, some too-trenchant political satire had provoked controversy in BBC offices, after which the administration saw a quest "for a rich vein of sentimental nostalgia."⁷⁹¹ The theatre parody may have aptly merged inoffensive satire with nostalgia.

All the remnants of the BBC episode are lost, including script and film.⁷⁹² It seems counterintuitive that from 1940 to 1965, from old media to new, the material survival *decreases*, though the authors of *Approaching Theatre*, amid their taxonomy of theatre's relations to mass

⁷⁸⁸ Edwin R. Schoell, "The Amateur Theatre in Great Britain," *Educational Theatre Journal* 15, no.2 (1963): 155, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3204419>; Cochrane, "Amateur Theatre." Cochrane never actually explains her titular phrase "pervasiveness of the commonplace," and admittedly neither writer mention parodies.

⁷⁸⁹ Briggs, *BBC*, 288.

⁷⁹⁰ Briggs, *BBC*, ix. One reference to paternalism (in a chapter epigram) uses "paternalist" favorably, 297.

⁷⁹¹ Quoted in Briggs, *BBC*, 337.

⁷⁹² Louise North, archive researcher, BBC Future Media and Technology, email to author, April 29, 2009.

entertainment media, describe new media as a “vast but unreliable memory bank.”⁷⁹³ In general, the producers of new media stress *production*, with less foresight to disposal or preservation (a tendency made obvious in computer production). In particular, the BBC, facing storage constraints, purged dated materials.⁷⁹⁴ What reaches us is a list of production credits, drawn from an unidentified resource and posted to the British Film Institute web site (data that are replicated on other television/film web-sites), which lacks a citation, hyperlink, or other means of corroboration.

Despite the scanty, questionable data, some distinct qualities of the production do suggest themselves, tentatively. Performers doubled parts, crossing white and Indian, perhaps in a gesture of revealing the artifice of acting. Even the Nathan/Jibbenainosay actor also played another character called Aristo (perhaps an echo of Emperor, the Negro servant named by ironic class-inversion). The cast added Indian roles, including a woman. For the first time in *Nick's* trajectory, Indians were given the other genre of personal name: not only *transliteration*, as in Bird's Wenonga, but *translation*, in the figures Bounding Elk and Dappled Fawn. (The latter might refer to a more Indian-ized Telie, but Fawn also alludes to a James Fenimore Cooper character.) This cast is joined by a “Brother Reuben” and “Sister Tabitha,” perhaps a nod to Nathan's Quakerism, alongside a bear impersonated by a human actor (or anyway credited by a full Anglo name). The list acknowledges musicians, who played the main instruments of nineteenth-century melodrama, piano and violin. As with the Dark Horse revision, the BBC version's transformations obscure its source, which perhaps drew from the compatriot Thomas Haines's script (housed in some universities and in the British Library). All episodes were

⁷⁹³ Helbo, Johanson, and Pavis, *Approaching Theatre*, 45.

⁷⁹⁴ Phil Tonge, “The Following Program is Not Suitable for those of a Nervous Disposition,” in *Creeping Fish: The Horror Fantasy Filmbook*, ed. David Kerekes (Manchester UK: Headpress/Critical Vision, 2003), 6. Tonge explains the BBC house-cleaning in relation to *Sweeney Todd*, specifically. The material transience of BBC drama is also explained by Plater, “Forty Years as a TV Dramatist,” 208.

credited to one “adaptor,” the seasoned actor Alec Clunes, though because he left little trace of any professional writing, that attribution remains uncertain.

The BBC broadcast was the first and only traceable television remediation of the play. In transmission of the play, the remediation is drastically transformative of old theatre: a one-shot occurrence, conveyed via air and electricity, reaching an audience dispersed in small groups in private, domestic spaces across a region. Unlike radio, television restored the visual dimension, albeit one flattened on a box screen. The episodes, an hour each, were broadcast in color (active since 1956)—though we don’t know whether the film showed outdoor, realistic settings, or a recreated stage. Whatever the abstract features, the medium is shaped by its political, economic, and cultural context. Through the large, complex mediation of the BBC—staffed by over twenty-two thousand workers at that time—the state, and the ethos of public weal undergirding the BBC, framed even a parody of outmoded melodrama. The “Gaslight” series was never aired in the US, although the semi-public program National Educational TV (NET) soon would import the BBC’s presentation of Victorian drama, *The Victorians*—which took an earnest tone.⁷⁹⁵

In the terms of this chapter, the remediation of the *play* is one process, the remediation of the *playscript* another. However drastic the new *transmission* medium of the play, the *inscription* medium, the BBC script, would not have been transubstantiated, relative to other playscripts. The only new medium affecting the reproduction of the television script was the *teleprompter*—the screen or box displaying scrolling scripts to performers or public speakers developed in the 1950s and harnessed for political speeches and television especially. (The BBC historian urged almost a half century ago that the device should be studied—but that has yet to happen.)⁷⁹⁶

Conclusion

⁷⁹⁵ Gary J. Scrimgeour, “Nineteenth-Century Drama,” *Victorian Studies* 12, no. 1 (September 1968): 100.

⁷⁹⁶ Briggs, *BBC*, vii.

The cultural dominance of radio, film, and television in the modern era calls attention to *media* in the contemporary use of the term, a truncation of *mass media*. Precision is warranted, as the media historian Lisa Gitelman argues at the same time that she advocates examining a particular medium in a historical case (LPs and emerging World Wide Web programs, in her project).⁷⁹⁷ The modern phase of playscripts of outmoded melodrama points to nuances in the phenomena related to media. These subtleties and complexities, as Gitelman explains, get obscured in the prevalent historiographic approaches that emphasize novelty and epistemic rupture, transfer human agency to technology, or foreground individual inventors.⁷⁹⁸ The full picture is a mixture of old and new, small and mass: consumers take in outmoded and modern forms (theatre and television); old forms enable new forms (playscripts for radio drama); and small technology crosses all media industries (typewriting). Individuals crossed media: Jeannette Marks-incorporated radio in her theatre program; Tom Taggart wrote for mass media; and Greig Steiner worked in television. There are complex unfoldings *within* an old medium (as when modern theatre revivals ridicule older theatre), and *across* media (as when parodies conflate the tropes of film and theatre). These interrelations are part of the history of theatre texts.

Moreover, the full array includes *means of production* media—that is, the backstage or behind the scenes material texts, which enable, but almost never reach, the product encountered by audiences, or in Gitelman’s terms, the inscription behind transmission. (For Gitelman, these would fall into her category of “protocols,” which include concepts, practices, and materials that put the medium into social operation, yet become so normal they seem unremarkable to users.)⁷⁹⁹ These playscripts develop differently from the final cultural product. Granted, changes in high-technology media yield powerful effects, and the transmission of *Nick* through airwaves (via

⁷⁹⁷ Gitelman, *Always Already New*, chap. 1.

⁷⁹⁸ Gitelman, *Always Already New*, chap. 1.

⁷⁹⁹ Gitelman, *Always Already New*, 6.

radio or television) affects audiences differently from a live, stage presentation. But the behind-the-scenes practices of the material text, the ones that matter here, do not always change apace with presentation media. It is the medium of *textual reproduction*, rather than the medium of representation, that most affects the material playscript: printing, and especially typewriting, which enabled rapid, small-scale copying by theatres. These textual technologies belong to larger economic processes—the business of publishing, or typewriting manufacture and labor—which operate distinctly from the economies of entertainment media.

As old playscripts flowed into learning institutions, through commercial play publishers, and across revivals in various media, their values and identities changed. While still a commodity for publishers, still a workaday document for entertainment production, and probably often rubbish, an old script also gained an association with *historical information*. Most of the revivals described here saw the script as signifying old theatre, not an actual frontier. In the trajectory of *Nick of the Woods*, its value as informational entertainment seems to end in 1965. In 1968, a US scholar complained that revivals ridiculed the old plays, expressing a hope that recent reprints would engender *serious* revivals, in any medium.⁸⁰⁰ For *Nick*, the course moved in the reverse direction: after the era of multi-media revivals, playbooks entered printed collections which had hitherto excluded it, not only print anthologies, but omnibus microform sets and digital databases of drama. During the rise of mass media, the developments in these separate spheres of knowledge and entertainment, and the interactions between them, fomented the conditions for specialized studies of, and an academic market for, outmoded drama—the next leg of the play’s life, and the subject of the next and final chapter.

⁸⁰⁰ Schirmgeour, “Nineteenth-Century Drama,” 100.

Chapter Seven:

Drama becomes Data: Old Playscripts Designed for Study

After playscripts came to rest on the shelves of institutions of learning, the passages described in chapter five, their physical presence remained rather static, except for the small travels across sections and divisions, until shifts in ideas about literature and culture (related to the definition of academic fields) rendered them intellectually significant. The transformations were influenced from multiple angles: among the student body, demographic expansion in quantity and kind (for women, minorities, non-elite classes, and veterans); among faculty and administration, intra- and inter-disciplinary struggles (as new fields and departments vied for prestige and resources); larger politics (as wars prompted patriotism and then criticism); and of course government policies shaping funding. From the moment of the Mount Holyoke practicum production to the political turns of the 1960s and 1970s, the unsteady contours of academic fields and the conceptions of the liberal arts determined what people in schools did with playscripts.

The alterations to the ivy tower informed, and were informed by, material texts—the printed books, microform, and digital resources—which were produced by publishers who specialized in, or marketed to institutions of learning. (At the larger scope of digital projects, this extends to a curious general public.) Ventures in the commerce of text adopted current media, print to internet, and built on prior formats, such as indexes, to repackage old substance, including (eventually), melodrama. Their organizational structures varied, from non-profit to limited liability corporation, while modes of production changed in step, more or less, with larger political economy trends of the era. These publishers, reborn information providers, reproduced drama in collections for an increasingly welcoming patronage in institutions of

learning, or in the case of Google Books, for the digital public. This chapter describes in turn the succession of re-appearances of *Nick of the Woods* across changing media: in a print anthology of drama, in microform, in digital forms, and, in the cameo of low-budget bootlegging. As in the rest of the life of *Nick*, these instances highlight areas for further study and illustrate larger developments in the intellectual values of outmoded drama, along with the political economy of reproducing playscripts.

Theatre in College

In order to envision the context of educational and informational drama publishing, we loop back to the sites of chapter five and the Mount Holyoke episode in chapter six, to retrace the emergence of drama and theatre studies. Students and faculty interacted with drama in two functions, for intellectual analysis and for practical production, each with a distinct history (neither studied exhaustively) but interacting in a complex relationship (also not much addressed). Because theatre synthesizes multiple modes—literary text, oration, impersonation, technical processes, public entertainment, and business—it emerged into a formal department by no simple route. Both Shannon Jackson and Marvin Carlson articulate the genesis of theatre in relation to the later advent of Performance Studies (both by means of Foucault), a trail that *perforce* begins in English studies, which emerged first, remained larger, and also has engendered more self-reflexive histories “genealogies.”⁸⁰¹ As US schools expanded from the traditional, elite, *belles lettres* studies to include or shift to a professional, practical orientation, it became possible to admit into college halls the pragmatic aspects of theatre, such as stage technology, but not

⁸⁰¹ Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chap. 2; Carlson, “Theatre and Performance at a Time of Shifting Disciplines,” *Theatre Research International*, 26, no. 2 (2001): 137-144, doi: 10.1017/S0307883301000141.

easily or holistically.⁸⁰² The practicum study of oratory could stream more continuously from traditional curricula into “Speech and Drama” courses, which became a standard in US schools by mid-century. Decades after the experimental forays of Jeannette Marks in Mount Holyoke, the often contradictory mix of theatre elements did coalesce into formal departments, adjoining or separate from English. US Theatre divisions inherited the structures and practices of well-established fields (trained faculty, sequential numbered courses, publications, and other protocols).⁸⁰³

Before and alongside this bumpy emergence of theatre departments, colleges afforded students the venue of recreational thespian clubs, which opened space for theatre events, even eventually co-ed productions, inside the university; according to Carlson, this extra-curricular activity remained the primary channel for theatre in English universities even after its integration in US academics.⁸⁰⁴ These clubs embodied qualities that merit attention—elite amateurism, institutional recreation, and cross-gender performance—though they fall outside my focus here. In relation to the lives of playscripts, the question is how clubs and young theatre departments made use of, or influenced, play publishing. Faculty and publishers collaborated to issue volumes of recent writing emerging from college playwriting programs, such as George Pierce Baker’s compilation of Harvard students’ *Plays of the 47 Workshop*, or a public university counterpart, *University of Michigan Plays*.⁸⁰⁵ Riding this tide, Samuel French renamed what it once called “collection” to “anthology,” publishing Baker’s later compilation from Yale, and issuing the unaffiliated *Plays for the College Theater* (which mixed Ibsen’s *Wild Duck* with un-enduring

⁸⁰² Jackson, *Professing Performance*, 20; Julie T. Klein, “Interdisciplinary Genealogy in Literary Studies,” in *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity, and Interdisciplinarity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 135. Klein lucidly disentangles the complicated unfolding in English.

⁸⁰³ Carlson, “Theatre and Performance,” 138-9.

⁸⁰⁴ Carlson, “Theatre and performance,” 138.

⁸⁰⁵ Baker, ed., *Plays of the 47 Workshop* (New York: Brentanos, 1918); Kenneth T. Rowe, ed., *University of Michigan Plays* (Ann Arbor, MI: George Wahr, 1929).

titles).⁸⁰⁶ However, these did not include century-old melodrama, which still had no collegiate imprimatur to propel it to print. And the way collegiate theatre constituted a publisher market is less clear than arena of textual drama study.

Drama was studied as literature under the auspices of literature in English classes, as Carlson explains,⁸⁰⁷ while the field was undergoing considerable foment. According to Julie T. Klein's "genealogy" of the interdisciplinarity of English studies, this conflict covered several tiers.⁸⁰⁸ At the foundation was a contest between incommensurable visions of purpose: to transmit humanism as generalists (in philology especially), or to instill professional skills as specialists in a delineated "discipline" (in linguistics and then other methods). The philologists' emphasis on great civilization would have precluded *Nick of the Woods* from their purview, while the rise of a strict "intrinsic" methodology, best known by the mid-century wave of "New Criticism" and its banishing of external factors from analysis, precluded melodrama, a mode that requires attention to stage presentation and public taste. Minor drama remained ancillary to English literary studies of any stripe, but counter-developments began opening room for it, in the advent of American Studies, first called American Civilization in some elite schools in the 1920s and 30s.⁸⁰⁹ Emerging from war-era patriotism, interdisciplinary studies of the country called "America" incorporated methods of history (if more intellectual than social) as well as cultural themes (particularly the now-outmoded idea of national character), approaches that broadened the contours of the canon or at least brought non-canonical works into view.

Outmoded Drama in Anthologies

In 1976 an English editor selected Medina's *Nick of the Woods* as one of the plays in his

⁸⁰⁶ Baker, ed., *Yale One-Act Plays* (New York: Samuel French, 1930); Garrett H. Leverton, ed. *Plays for the College Theater* (New York: Samuel French, 1932).

⁸⁰⁷ Carlson, "Theatre and Performance," 138.

⁸⁰⁸ Klein, "Interdisciplinary Genealogy in Literary Studies," 133-172.

⁸⁰⁹ Klein, "Interdisciplinary Genealogy in Literary Studies," 140-145.

volume of *Victorian Melodrama*, an anthology designed to serve scholars and students, but also accessible to general readers.⁸¹⁰ This structure of the anthology, as well as the marketing cross-over to trade and “text book” patrons, remains so prevalent still in 2012 that its familiarity fogs its historical particularity. The drama anthology developed as a distinct social-material phenomenon, and specifically, the reprinting of *outmoded*, denigrated plays such as *Nick* represents an off-shoot of the trajectory of drama publishing. *Nick* and *Hamlet* enter the classroom by separate routes, in developments that involve cultural concepts, intellectual practices, and material (not only the stuff of books, but the political economy of publishing). The *Nick* anthology reprint can be understood as a minor variation in a half-century trajectory of publishing old drama in a collection format, which informed and was informed by developments in college classrooms, or the larger intellectual tides that shaped the study of non-canon plays.

The documents used in classrooms, generically called textbooks, can be re-read as artifacts and agents of the development of drama in university studies, part of “the larger process of the production of cultural commodities” that Michael Apple advocates we examine through “the production of curricular materials.”⁸¹¹ The long-dominant type of anthology for the English literature classroom was the volume dedicated to canon, or quality works and demarcated by a well-defined period, often represented by name rather than numbers (Medieval, Renaissance, and so on). These presentations were shaped by the arena of scholarly, or critical, editing, which for “Anglophone literary and theatrical works became a scholarly or ‘scientific’ discipline” in the New Bibliography era of 1930s to 1950s, establishing methods that “radically influenced” and pervaded US editorial practices into the 1970s, according to an explication of this history (for

⁸¹⁰ James L. Smith, ed., *Victorian Melodramas: Seven English, French, and American Melodramas* (Totowa NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976).

⁸¹¹ Apple, “Political Economy of Text Publishing,” in *Language, Authority and Criticism: Readings on the School Textbook*, ed. Suzanne De Castell, Allan Luke, and Carmen Luke (London: Falmer Press, 1989), chap. 12, 156.

European editors descended from different distaffs).⁸¹² The anthology format underwent its own “curious history,” which William Proctor Williams traces to the expansion of enrollments to non-elites.⁸¹³ Anthologies corresponded to the prevalent conception of literary history: the chronological sequence of great works by great writers in English, and especially in England. In this lineage, post-medieval drama was admitted when it or its writer emanated exemplary aesthetic qualities; plays were not selected by the criteria of popularity, social inclusivity, or historical comprehensiveness. These mainstay textbooks of English literature courses bypassed the theatrical period between the Restoration and Modernism.

Alongside the array of college textbooks and other collections, however, emerged a few monumental projects concentrated on the single genre of drama and delimited by nation. One US set in particular endured over half a century: Arthur Hobson Quinn’s *Representative American Plays*, first published in 1917 by a general firm D. Appleton (which issued drama, drama studies, fiction, and other works), then reprinted and revised over ten times up to 1966 (during which time Appleton underwent the corporate merger typical of the time).⁸¹⁴ The category of *representative* seems to have resonated especially in the 1920s and 30s. A year after Quinn’s inaugural edition came *Representative Plays by American Dramatists*, the assemblage by Montrose Moses that would also be reprinted.⁸¹⁵ As the stage career of *Nick of the Woods* suggests, Medina’s dramatization of Bird’s novel was arguably “representative,” by the gauges of public popularity, geographic reach, the prevalence of dramatizing, the Bowery Theatre style of spectacle under Medina’s boss, Thomas Hamblin, and several of the characterizations and

⁸¹² Paul Eggert and Peter Shillingsburg, introduction to *Ecdotica* 6 (2009): 11-19, <http://ecdotica.org>.

⁸¹³ Williams, “Inclusive Ignorance: the Anthology, English Studies, and Higher Education in the United States,” *Notes & Queries* 3, no. 4 (2006): 536-542.

⁸¹⁴ Quinn, *Representative American Plays* (New York: Appleton, 1917, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1925, 1928, 1938, 1939, 1953, 1958; repr. New York: Century, 1966).

⁸¹⁵ Moses, ed., *Representative Plays by American Dramatists, 1815-58* (New York: E. P. Dutton: 1918).

tropes (a menaced virgin, woodsman, and reprobate villain)—though not by the hindsight measures of dramatic literary historians. The editors eschewed dramatizations and spectacle (or theatricality), in favor of ostensibly original playwriting and literary qualities, especially verse, though Moses admitted Aiken’s dramatization of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and later volumes opened room for *East Lynne*, but not others. According to Gary Scrimgeour’s review of later anthologies, by this aesthetic scale, literary text was promoted, while theatricality, especially spectacle, was demoted.⁸¹⁶ Medina’s *Nick of the Woods* was bypassed even under a nationalist rubric (while George W. Harby’s manuscript remained unknown, though less explicably, even his brother Isaac Harby’s printed plays were omitted.) The editors found better embodiments of the historical, rural US in *Shenandoah*, and better depictions of the Indian in the tragic noble-savage type, whether a chief in *Metamora* or a princess in *Pocahontas*. *Nick* did not make the grade as a “favorite,” in Barrett Clark’s *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century*, which, under the imprint of Princeton University, emanated from and aimed for academic study.⁸¹⁷ Nor could it be considered a “lost play” to join Clark’s parallel set of *America’s Lost Plays*, a project he publicized on a radio program.⁸¹⁸ In general, the mid- to late 1830s were occluded, except for a few titles by Bird, Boker, and Willis in Quinn’s anthology. The measures of favorite, lost, best, and American were malleable, delineated perhaps as much to influence ideas as to represent historical events. As Thomas Postlewait explains in his critical review of theatre studies’ skewed account of melodrama (as good drama’s agonistic “other”), these selections corresponded to, and mutually reinforced, the editors’ scholarly arguments—the “party line for the champions of high

⁸¹⁶ Gary J. Scrimgeour, “Review: Nineteenth-Century Drama,” *Victorian Studies* 12, no. 1 (September, 1968): 91.

⁸¹⁷ Clark, *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943).

⁸¹⁸ Clark, *America’s Lost Plays* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940-9). The radio program and script provenance are mentioned in Clark, introduction to *Favorite American Plays*, x.

culture.”⁸¹⁹ And if not a literal party, they did share a professional network: Clark lists both Quinn and Nicoll as advisors. The sets established a kind of extra-canon canon, and, providing the most accessible source of nineteenth-century plays under the sanction of scholarly editors, they wielded influence, having “guided teaching and shaped publication” across eight decades, as Postlewait asserts and the cascade of reprints implies.⁸²⁰

In the 1960s came a spate of publications more oriented to nineteenth-century popular plays, which aimed in different ways for representation of qualities besides aesthetics (although sometimes still based in an aesthetic evolution teleology). The shift corresponded to changes in academics, indicated by the (relative) surge of scholarly writings about melodrama, which in terms of editing principles, had to shift from the emphasis on authorial intention. University presses published monographs by scholars, David Grimsted and Frank Rahill, that concentrated on melodrama, more visibly than the unpublished theses or sub-sections tucked in theatre histories, both of which remained touchstones on the subject.⁸²¹ Presumably, English incorporated melodrama plays into curricula before Theatre (though syllabi are not systematically traceable). Theatre classes did not yet analyze playtexts; as Carlson explains, the newer field involved the history and theory of theatrical elements, “but not, strangely, literary study of the plays themselves, since this would challenge the already established domain of English and other literary disciplines.” Moreover, its preferred subjects were still drawn from cases of European and Modernist high culture, (diversified by a few admissible instances from Asia), an orientation that would still preclude melodrama.⁸²² Theatre departments’ practicum

⁸¹⁹ Postlewait, “From Melodrama to Realism: the Suspect History of American Drama,” in *Melodrama: the Cultural Emergence of a Genre*, ed. Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 45.

⁸²⁰ Postlewait, “From Melodrama to Realism,” in Hays and Nikolopoulou, *Melodrama*, 46.

⁸²¹ David Grimsted *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theatre and Culture 1800-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Frank Rahill, *World of Melodrama* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967).

⁸²² Carlson, “Theatre and Performance,” 139.

productions had begun to include nineteenth-century melodrama by the 1970s, though when, and from which playscripts, are questions that require elaborate archival excavations.

The market in old drama seemed rewarding enough to attract publishers of several stripes: mainstream (Dell, Houghton Mifflin, and E.P. Dutton); smaller presses (the New York reprint specialists Benjamin Blom and Arno Press); as well as university presses, which entered their 1960s “golden age,”⁸²³ besides dedicated play publishers, among whom Samuel French remained the dominant purveyor. The departure from the Quinn and Moses legacy, and the larger ethos of Anglo-American scholarly editing, is manifest in *British Plays of the Nineteenth Century*, in which the editor J. O. Bailey explains that he selected plays to “illustrate the evolution of the English drama in the nineteenth century” in a sequence of modes (romance, melodrama, and others), proposing that these works can be “valued for illustrating development” rather than for “any high standard of dramatic art.”⁸²⁴ Bailey presented the selected plays as an *explicit* illustration of an historical relativist thesis (rather than leaving the historiography implicit), and he abandoned the aesthetic hierarchy, a shift he needed to justify, though even those revisions did not make room for Haines. Two other 1960s editors did include Haines, though not his *Nick of the Woods*, within this expanding editorial compass. One of the key English melodrama scholars, Michael R. Booth, selected *My Poll and My Partner Joe*, the successful nautical and abolitionist play, for his *Hiss the Villain: Six English and American Melodramas*—perhaps the first collection to foreground *melodrama* in the title.⁸²⁵ The next year, Booth would publish his monograph, *English Melodrama*, in an alternation between editing and

⁸²³ Michael Schudson, introduction *The Enduring Book: Print Culture in PostWar America*, vol. 5 of *The Book in America*, ed. David Paul Nord, Joan Shelley Rubin, and Michael Schudson (Charlotte NC: American Antiquarian Society/University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2009), 9.

⁸²⁴ Bailey, *British Plays of the Nineteenth Century: an Anthology to Illustrate the Evolution of Drama* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966); Herring, “Review: Nineteenth-Century Drama,” *Modern Philology* 68, no.1 (August, 1970): 85, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/436307>. The Bailey quotation is from Herring.

⁸²⁵ Booth, *Hiss the Villain: Six English and American Melodramas* (New York, Benjamin Blom, 1964).

scholarship that typified these anthology editors.⁸²⁶ First published in 1964 by separate houses in London and New York, Booth's anthology sold well enough to warrant a reprinting in 1967 and another a decade later. In it, *My Poll* was joined by a temperance play, W.W. Pratt's *Ten Nights in a Barroom*, Augustine Daly's *Gaslight* (which had appeared in Clark's *Lost Plays*), and Leopold Lewis's *The Bells* (a play renowned for association with both a prominent actor and a pivotal stage designer), though not a frontier drama, and not Medina, despite the set's American reach.

These anthologies supplied the sources for classroom reading and faculty research. Spectacle melodrama playscripts were difficult to obtain, or, when they could be gotten through acting editions, they would "tire the eyes," according to Booth,⁸²⁷ and thus reprints were welcomed, if judiciously, by other scholars in English and adjunct fields. In a review of five then-recent anthologies for a philology journal, Paul D. Herring explained the worth of these volumes: with one especially "useful in class," they all enable "professors and students" to "finally discuss meaningfully the dramatic literature of the [nineteenth] century," rather than just the well represented *fin de siècle* plays, as they also let a reader "begin to judge for himself the importance of melodrama."⁸²⁸ In a multiple-book review in a Victorian literature journal, Gary Scrimgeour described Booth's anthology as "excellent for course," seeing it as likely to "stimulate attention from teachers and students."⁸²⁹ Reviewers presumed that colleagues were searching for suitable course texts. But Scrimgeour's praise was not automatic; he criticized editors for favoring the century's later decades, excluding prolific writers (which arguably Haines and Medina were), and like others he complained about redundancy, that is, reprinting

⁸²⁶ Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: H. Jenkins, 1965).

⁸²⁷ Booth, *English Melodrama*, 6.

⁸²⁸ Herring, "Review: Nineteenth-Century Drama," 85, 83.

⁸²⁹ Scrimgeour, "Review: Nineteenth-Century Drama," *Victorian Studies* 12, no. 1 (September, 1968): 91-100.

plays already reprinted. A decade after Booth's anthologizing of *My Poll*, the English editor Michael Kilgarriff included a different nautical play by Haines, *Ocean of Life*, in the anthology, *The Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve Nineteenth Century Melodramas*.⁸³⁰ Not only did Kilgarriff insert "melodrama" in the title, twice, but he re-described the era cherished as Victorian as its "golden age." Offering twice the number of plays that Booth offered, he added Planché's *Vampire* to the roster and chose different representatives of temperance and labor sub-genres. Perhaps not coincidentally, two of his entries appeared in the 1965 BBC TV *Gaslight Theatre* series: the anonymous *Maria Martin* (when unnamed authors were rare in these sets); and *A String of Pearls*, the play later renamed *Sweeney Todd*.

In university studies, meanwhile, to summarize and oversimplify complex developments: American Civilization helped to engender the myth-and-symbol or archetype analysis (embodied in the work of Northrop Frye), that afforded a viable alternative to New Criticism. The myth-and-symbol orientation underlay a few early studies of Bird's novel (and that remained unconcerned with its bigotry).⁸³¹ Influenced by demographic shifts and social movements, some strands of American Studies followed the cultural turn toward early Cultural Studies, opening space for un-celebratory examinations of America and its figures. In this vein came a late 1970s inventory of the Indian trope (as a White construction) that acknowledged Medina's dramatization, and the first scholarly criticism of Bird's Indian depictions on social-political grounds.⁸³² English departments or budding interdisciplinary fields expanded the earlier approaches toward popular culture, seeing in *old* popular culture (especially working-class

⁸³⁰ Kilgarriff, ed., *The Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve Nineteenth Century Melodramas* (London: Wolfe, 1974).

⁸³¹ On myth and symbol in general, see Klein, "Interdisciplinary Genealogy in Literary Studies," 163-4; one application to Bird is James C. Bryant, "The Fallen World in *Nick of the Woods*," *American Literature* 38, no. 3 (November, 1966): 352-364. The term "fallen" signals his concern for Christian rather than social signifiers.

⁸³² Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf/Random House, 1978); Bette S. Weidman, "White Men's Red Man: A Penitential Reading of Four American Novels," *Modern Language Studies* 4, no. 2 (Autumn, 1974): 14-26.

pleasures) an historical index of a not-idealized, diverse national culture, and hence a subject fit for study. In the rhetoric of astonishment, one journalist named Bird's *Nick of the Woods* as one of these unlikely syllabus readings in the new "pop culture" studies.⁸³³ This opening rendered melodrama and once-unfathomable sub-genres more recognizable to 1970s academic pursuits,⁸³⁴ and so more financially-viable for publishers.

Anthologized *Nick of the Woods*

Into this melodrama-friendly print market, which traversed the Atlantic, came Medina's *Nick of the Woods* in the anthology *Victorian Melodramas*.⁸³⁵ Though the anthology was named for an English monarch, the subtitle conveys the collection's unusual transnational, trans-lingual scope, *Seven English, French and American Melodramas*. The term *melodrama* had become acceptable enough to repeat in both title and subtitle. Smith's selection spans 1831 (Milner's *Mazeppa*) to 1868 (*London by Night* of uncertain attribution), with almost requisite representation of the prominent writer Boucicault (*Corsican Brothers*), the temperance sub-genre (Sedley's *The Drunkard*), a labor play (Walker's *The Factory Lad*), and a fallen woman theme (*Lady of the Camillas*). Within the new turn of attention to melodrama, Smith was the first editor to recognize in *Nick* an apt representation of a popular "American" play. That type of culture was still an exception, or a lark, for trade houses, relative to their ordinary fare: the London publisher, Dent, otherwise published more normally respected drama of older and more recent periods, other literary genres, and studies of classical composers, while the New Jersey firm covered similar literature, but expanded the scope to studies of Africa, economics, and the history of the

⁸³³ John Camper, "Studying Pop Culture at Bowling Green," *Chicago Sun-Times*, repr. *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1978, H16, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁸³⁴ Brenda Assael, "Theatre," *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, ed. Kelly Boyd (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999), 1179.

⁸³⁵ Medina [Hamblin], "Nick of the Woods," in *Victorian Melodrama: Seven English, French and American Melodramas* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1976; Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976), 65-96.

news press. The anthology was acquired by numerous universities in Great Britain and across the US, where some copies remained as the site's only edition of *Nick*.

Taller than acting editions and hardbound, *Victorian Melodrama* bears little resemblance to its sources. Besides the obligatory introduction, Smith includes glossy-coated illustrations (the *Nick* advertising poster showing the cascade scene) and a prose guide to further reading (of plays, reviews, or literary criticism). In his framing essay, an apology for the mode of melodrama in general, the sub-genres, and the plays individually, written in friendly prose, Smith invokes Charles Dickens' figure of "Joe Whelks" to signify a typical audience member, explaining that melodrama "dramatized Joe's problems...it faced his fears and fantasies and exorcised them all,"⁸³⁶ historicizing the appeal of melodrama's moral template in a bewildering era. His analysis of broad-brushed characters, plot arcs, and sub-genres echoed the commonplace in theatre history (as his myopia for the male working-class spectators persevered until the 1990s). When he reaches *Nick*, Smith contextualizes it in the timeline of US theatre: Medina's dramatization marks the moment when "native melodrama came of age," after plays had long been just "carbon copies" (in his typewriting trope) of European models. That domestication lay in the subject of "pioneering life." Different from earlier editors, Smith empathizes with popular appeal, finding it "easy to see" why *Nick* succeeded, when it was

complete with rocky passes, forest wilds, savage panthers, log stockades, abductions, tortures, redskins, burning wigwams, a generous discharge of firearms, and the terrifying vision of the Jibbenainosay, a homicidal maniac who appears "*precipitated down the cataract in a canoe of fire*" while the injuns utter yells of terror and the paleface folks evince polite astonishment.⁸³⁷

Tracing Medina's source to the novel, Smith echoes Bird's own account of its genesis, explaining that the novelist abandoned the noble savage trope, noting that Medina heeded Bird's

⁸³⁶ Smith, introduction to *Victorian Melodrama*, viii.

⁸³⁷ Smith, introduction to *Victorian Melodrama*, xvii-xviii. Punctuation in original.

prejudice in her portrait of the Shawnees as “second sons of Satan.” That distasteful ethos, while noteworthy, was not reason to rebuff the play, as perhaps it had been for earlier editors. Smith observes that Bird in a similar polemic rendered the often idealized white backwoodsman figure “unglamorously,” an interpretation at odds with some US scholars’ approbation of Ralph.⁸³⁸

In his section presenting Medina’s play, Smith credits a Samuel French edition as his source of *Nick*, explaining that he altered the text only to expand “one or two stage directions,” for clarity. The unspoken editorial policy aims to present *text*, supported by minimal apparatus, not to replicate the look of the printed play—a policy that underlay almost all reprints of *Nick* or other plays by Medina and Haines, outside the microform and digital facsimiles discussed later. At the top, Smith reproduces a cast list: not a reproduction of a playbook’s table (“none of these is mentioned in the text of Miss Medina’s play”), but a reconstruction of Proctor’s debut in the Bowery (often taken as the play’s premiere), culled without citation from Odell’s chronicle. After the cast list comes Smith’s background for readers: an explanation of Louisa Hamblin “née Medina” and the play’s genesis (without citation). In his account of *Nick*, Smith refers to Haines’s version, which he seems to have skimmed quickly, as well as two UK dramatizations (identified by stage productions, not state license files), perhaps the only secondary text to recognize multiple versions. In configuring the dramatic text—editors needed style policies for drama format—the anthology homogenized the style for all seven plays, which resembles Spencer’s in overall layout and letter case, but sets character labels in a larger type, and expands their truncated form to full spelling. Both decisions enabling easier reading.

Like other anthology editors, Smith conducted research on the subject. He had recently written a monograph on melodrama, one in the “critical idiom” series focused on genres (which

⁸³⁸ See chap. 2, page 74.

was still one of the main axes of literary analysis).⁸³⁹ A few years later, he would edit Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance*, which, though not a melodrama, propagated one of the period's most successful writers.⁸⁴⁰ In the 1976 anthology, Smith showed attentiveness to Boucicault's name, which he presented in full and rare elaboration, Dionysius Lardner Boucicault. Yet for Medina's name, he oscillates. In the table of contents, Smith uses Hamblin, contradicting all the print editions of her plays; in his introduction and at the top of the play he uses Medina; and his biography headers covers both, "Louisa Hamblin *née* Medina." In prioritizing the social over the professional name, Smith may have been influenced by the Library of Congress controlling authority, but his (patriarchal) name in the table of contents would itself have influence (as the base of catalogue entries). And Smith subsumes Medina further: after his introduction spends more time on Bird's work, his playwright biography identifies her first as "Third wife of Thomas Sowerby Hamblin, leading man and manager of the Bowery theatre from 1830 to 1848"⁸⁴¹ (Hamblin, like Boucicault, meriting a full name), a designation, it may go without saying, he does not use for the men playwrights (apart from noting Dumas's salacious post-partum marriage).⁸⁴² While including a woman writer, his representation of her was untouched by the rising field of women's history and the surging social movement behind it.

Medina as Woman Playwright

Most of these anthology editors, besides being men, were unconcerned with the category of gender, in the sense of representing women writers or of considering how masculine or feminine categories were depicted in the plays. Though they had included a few (Ana Cora Mowatt's *Fashion*, and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" lyricist Julia Ward Howe), they left

⁸³⁹ Smith, *Melodrama* (London: Methuen, 1973).

⁸⁴⁰ Dion Boucicault *London Assurance*, ed. James L. Smith (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984).

⁸⁴¹ Smith, *Victorian Melodramas*, 66.

⁸⁴² Smith, *Victorian Melodramas*, 176.

other US nineteenth-century women playwrights in the shadows, even after literary history had recovered women writers in other genres. One of the first women-centered anthologies, a 1981 trade edition, began from Mowatt's *Fashion*.⁸⁴³ Medina's plays were reprinted or referred to mainly for other variables: as melodrama, and as American, in Smith and microform projects. Thirty years after a Haines play first appeared in a drama anthology, and almost twenty years after Smith reprinted Medina's *Nick*, her *Ernest Maltravers* was included in a US feminist scholar's drama collection, *Plays by Early American Women, 1775-1850*.⁸⁴⁴ Amelia Howe Kritzer's anthology was the first and remains the only publication that reprinted a play by Medina that was published because of the writer's gender (or sex, as it was still usually called), in conjunction with national identity. While a few scholars had written *about* Medina as a rare woman playwright, it remained difficult for anyone hunting women's plays to locate a copy of her plays (and Smith's renaming would have helped obscure *Nick*). The University of Michigan Press, having already specialized in US feminist theatre in tandem with gender analyses of literature, was primed to see value in Kritzer's contents: an unstaged colonial-era play (Mercy Warren's *The Group*); a comic opera libretto by the creator of the household name *Charlotte Temple*; a post-independence Boston playwright; a work by the multiple-genre writer who wrote an exposé of Medina's husband, Carr; and the relatively successful Charlotte Barnes (*Forest Princess*), besides Medina's dramatization of Bulwer-Lytton's fated-love story. Why *Ernest*? In relation to the print market, *Nick* was already available (and copyrighted); in relation to ideologies, its anti-Indian ethos might have dampened Kritzer's efforts to re-evaluate forgotten women authors, while *Pompeii* lacks the central heroine amenable to her feminist themes, if its setting was not also too remote.

⁸⁴³ Judith E. Bartlow, ed., *Plays by American Women: the Early Years* (New York: Avon Books, 1981).

⁸⁴⁴ Kritzer, ed., *Plays by Early American Women, 1775-1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

Generously propagating her subject, Kritzer appendixes a 73-page bibliography of pre-1900 US women dramatists, which enumerates the most thorough inventory of Medina's playwriting to date.⁸⁴⁵ Following the scholar-editor tradition, Kritzer had studied drama related to the category of women, though not to the subject of her anthology (her dissertation and monograph analyzed one gender-conscious, recent, English playwright, Caryl Churchill).⁸⁴⁶ Anthologizing plays "drawn from the dusty depths of obscurity,"⁸⁴⁷ Kritzer's introduction advances their relevance to a feminist history, since they center on women characters, illustrate women's actual lives, and index women's agency in publishing; as well as their position in national culture ("Women playwrights of early America participated actively in theatre's project of creating a distinctive definition of the American").⁸⁴⁸ Kritzer extends that gendered view to the subject of publishing, finding a woman's agency in her preface, though noting that "interestingly" Medina had none (a gap explained by her having died fifteen years before the first printing). Kritzer also reads agency in a play's acting edition, which, because it "includes specifications for scene design, costuming, and stage business, creates in itself a distinct image of a woman immersed in theatre and competent at creating" a lucrative play.⁸⁴⁹ The noted features of the acting edition, as I suggested in chapters two and four, were heavily mediated by theatre convention and publisher's practices, and at best dimly refract a writer's agency.

Kritzer's attention to textual production is also manifest in the presentist editorial policy, which she articulates, to update spelling and punctuation. In the publisher style, as always, differences in page format are signaled by the character labels: while both Smith's and Kritzer's anthologies give the full names rather than a truncation, *Victorian Melodrama* uses the

⁸⁴⁵ Kritzer, "Women Dramatists in the United States before 1900," in *Plays by American Women*, 369-444.

⁸⁴⁶ Kritzer, *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Theatre of Empowerment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

⁸⁴⁷ Kritzer, introduction to *Plays by Early American Women*, 4.

⁸⁴⁸ Kritzer, introduction to *Plays by Early American Women*, 1.

⁸⁴⁹ Kritzer, introduction to *Plays by Early American Women*, 23.

Spencer/French style of italics but not their indent; *Plays by Early American Women* uses the indent but opts for capitals. The auspices of a university press, and the orientation towards classroom use, would have encouraged the decision to footnote archaic phrases and historic references and also to drop “blocking directions” (stage positions), which Smith’s reprint also did but without explication. These amendments, Kritzer explains, were aimed to facilitate two functions, “reading and performance.”⁸⁵⁰ While performance corresponds to a practical theatre market (inside or outside of school), reading refers to other markets, for leisure pastime or study (in research and coursework). Smith and Kritzer’s editorial policy, spoken or unspoken, presumes that such studies emphasize *text*, rather than the theatre history manifest in position acronyms, or the publishing history evident in paratexts and format style.

The scholar Rosemarie Bank (who had written about Medina) extols Kritzer’s anthology in her back-cover blurb as indispensable to “a nineteenth-century American theatre history course,” praise that sounds reasonable rather than hyperbolic, amid the genre of play anthologies in an era attuned to forgotten voices.⁸⁵¹ Framed as a woman’s work, and issued in a cross-over trade/textbook format, Medina’s *Ernest* could be recognized in ways her *Nick* might not be, as when a University of Illinois theatre teacher used the book as a reader, and assigned *Ernest* on his 1999 syllabus,⁸⁵² along with two other plays in Kritzer’s anthology. A less expected use of the scholarly anthology appears in another format of drama publication: the anthology of monologues for actors to recite for auditions. *The Ultimate Audition Book* of 222 monologues borrowed an excerpt from *Ernest Maltravers*, a one-paragraph romantic lament not of the tragic lead, Alice, but of the minor woman character, Lady Florence. Though a commercial, functional

⁸⁵⁰ Kritzer, introduction to *Plays by Early American Women*, 26.

⁸⁵¹ Bank, publication blurb on *Plays by American Women*, Kritzer, ed., back cover.

⁸⁵² Ronald Wainscott, syllabus, *American Drama & Theatre I: Beginnings to 1890*, University of Indiana, Spring 1999, accessed May 3, 2007, http://www.indiana.edu/~deanfac/blspr99/thtr/thtr_t565_4084.html.

publication, the monologue anthology offers no academic apparatus, explanation of editorial policies, no citation of its source, and no an account of the playwright and play.⁸⁵³ That *Ernest* excerpt belongs, if not to an explicit series, then to a textual cash-crop of one compiler (who has no record of scholarship) working with one minor publisher, who recycled 1990s compilations under rotating titles: *Best* or *100* or *Ultimate*; *Monologues* or *Study Scenes* or *Stage Scenes*; for men or for women or both. This reprint of Medina's *Ernest* represents a distinct strand of theatre publishing that operates separately from, even as it draws from, academic work.

When *Nick of the Woods* was incorporated in an Indiana University graduate English class (around 1998), the professor recalls that "The copy was probably a pamphlet bound edition from NYPL; I circulated it in grad classes as a photocopy."⁸⁵⁴ His syllabus for "Rites of Dissent: Demobilizing the Subject, 1800-1899" dated the play to its premiere, reversed the title and subtitle (calling it *Jibbenainosay*), and cited no source, gestures that were not incongruent with the cultural studies approach to drama, for which the play is an index of mass mentality (in my phrase), especially in its early appearance (the premiere date). The approach, which I appreciate for its cross-media articulations, often obscures the thick mediations and materiality of the plays, as print artifacts.⁸⁵⁵ Smith's 1976 anthology was used twenty years later by a later English professor, Laura Mielke, in an Iowa State University course, "American Indian Encounters and American Literature." Echoing her dissertation and monograph (which I mentioned in chapter two), the syllabus posed as its core enquiry, "how the encounter contributed to the development

⁸⁵³ Jocelyn Beard, ed., *The Ultimate Audition Book: 222 Monologues 2 Minutes and Under* (Lyme, NH: Smith & Krauss, 1997), 54.

⁸⁵⁴ Prof. Marc Bousquet, St. Clara University, CA, email message to author, March 30, 2012.

⁸⁵⁵ Marc Bousquet, syllabus, L653 "Rites of Dissent: Demobilizing the Subject, 1800-1899," Indiana University/Louisville, n/d (ca. 1998), accessed April 3, 2008, <http://athena.louisville.edu/a-s/english/subcultures/L653books.html>.

of an ‘American’ literature *and* an American Indian literature of protest,”⁸⁵⁶ two cultural studies hallmarks—a disenfranchised group’s resistance and a charged category—for which students read Medina’s *Nick* as the only drama in the mix of fiction, non-fiction, and film. The information in Smith’s introduction and acting edition paratexts are moot to this line of enquiry.

Drama on Microform

Kritzer’s introduction explained that old plays were available “only on microprint and in rare book collections.”⁸⁵⁷ Though for the anthology editor, microform signified *hard to obtain*, in its hopeful years before desktop computers, microform represented enormous possibility for expanding, and even democratizing, access to culture and literature. In the middle century, between the 1940s through the 1970s, it represented the possibility of democratizing access to culture and knowledge. Microform is perhaps the most complex phase in the history of reproducing dramatic texts and one of the most neglected chapters in the histories of books. In terms of chronology, military politics, and cultural politics, it can be considered a distinct Cold War medium, used during that era for espionage, Area Studies research, and the preservation of Western civilization against the threat of weapons of mass destruction, a fear provoked by actual destruction of European resources in the Second World War and prolonged by the US/Soviet arms race. (Writings about the new medium did invoke the atom bomb.) In one US book historian’s caveat, “the Cold War was a component of everything...but by no means a full explanation of everything.”⁸⁵⁸ Besides fear and violence, professionals working with books and papers were confronting the problem of storage, as documents proliferated and accumulated; meanwhile, precious and rare ones deteriorated, driving the search for preservation technologies.

⁸⁵⁶ Mielke, syllabus, English 463 American Indian Encounters & American Literature,” Iowa State, Fall 2005, accessed December 5, 2008, <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~mielke/Archived/English463.pdf>. On her analysis of Medina, see chap. 2.

⁸⁵⁷ Kritzer, introduction to *Plays by American Women*, 1.

⁸⁵⁸ Schudson, introduction *The Enduring Book*, ”15.

Microform's apparent "panacea" for these multi-pronged problems,⁸⁵⁹ its arcane material qualities, and its political-social historical emergence, mark this phase as a distinct episode in the life of plays and books in general.

Originated in nineteenth-century novelty gadgets (starting from the early era of *Nick*), the technology was advanced through military operations (pigeons in the Franco-Prussian war) and the finance industry (for bank checks), before it was adopted for civilian and cultural purposes. Microform emerged as a mode of textual reproduction imbued with tremendous promise, developed through elaborate interactions across distinct social spheres of science and technology, government (including the military), publishers, and institutions of learning. The medium was harnessed by humanities projects, including theatre and drama history. In this great tide, tens of thousands of plays, of dizzying variety, were reproduced in miniature facsimile through multiple arrangements. Medina's plays were micro-copied by three or four commercial publishers, at least three universities, and the New York Public Library, appearing in all-theatrical sets, sets of mixed genres, or singly, in film, fiche, and microcards (formats I delineate below). Melodrama and other old plays were disseminated to a wider network of institutions, and across the US, yet they ultimately remained confined to the rarified domain of learning. Never integrated in practical theatre or everyday reading (not even for homework reading), and never integrated with writing as digital operations would be, microform playscripts became different kinds of material texts: historic *documents*, objects of study, and information—"data" *avant la lettre*.⁸⁶⁰

In the view of a book historian,

a full telling of this story of production and distribution of print after the world wars would detail the postwar vogue of microcards, microfiche, and microfilm as the means of

⁸⁵⁹ Kenneth Cmiel, "Libraries, Books and the Information Age," in *The Enduring Book*, 330.

⁸⁶⁰ Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2006), chap. 1. While embracing Gitelman's concept "data of culture" as applicable to any era (1890s recordings), I confine the term "data" to its historical trajectory.

conserving and distributing printed books, newspapers, dissertations, and manuscript archives, a process much abetted by recently founded university centers as well as by two commercial ventures, University Microfilms (founded 1938) and the Readex Microprint Corp (founded 1948).⁸⁶¹

Both companies issued plays by Medina: University Microfilms her *Last Days of Pompeii*, and Readex all three of her plays, along with many by Haines. Readex warrants more attention here for its mammoth projects dedicated to plays, although UMI returns later as we segue to digital drama. The following detour recounts the story of Readex to convey qualities of the medium in general, winding back to case of *Nick of the Woods*.

Readex

According to the standard company historiography, the founder, Albert Boni, an Ivy League drop-out, first entered the book trade in the 1910s, running a Greenwich Village bookstore and small, erudite book publishing firm in partnership with his brother Charles.⁸⁶² Albert Boni next partnered with the soon-to-be founder of the Book-of-the-Month Club to issue elegant reprints, which interspersed a few works of drama in its list of intellectual and leftist titles (including the Sacco and Vanzetti court report by Jeannette Marks). Sparked by an interest in photography, the narrative says, Boni began scheming about reducing and re-enlarging text.⁸⁶³ The purported socialist solicited capital investments to underwrite the budding company, as it tinkered with the new technology of shrinking and re-enlarging text. As his first major job, Boni collaborated with the British government to micropublish parliament documents (*House of Commons Sessional Papers*), followed by a collaboration with the American Antiquarian Society to issue *Early American Imprints*. These early projects refined the protocols of technology,

⁸⁶¹ David D. Hall, "Bibliography and the Meaning of 'Text,'" in *The Enduring Book*, 253.

⁸⁶² Carmen R. Russell, "Albert and Charles Boni," in *American Literary Publishing Houses, 1900-1980: Trade and Paperback*, ed. Peter Dzwonkoski, vol. 46 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Gale, 1986), 54-57.

⁸⁶³ August A. Imholtz, "Albert Boni: A Sketch of a Life in Micro-Opaque," *Proceedings of American Antiquarian Association* 115, pt. 2 (October 2005): 253-277.

manufacture, organizational coordination, and marketing networks which would serve the large drama projects.

Microform Format

The micropublishing pioneers developed several formats, which vied for dominance. For projects of reproducing pre-existing documents (leaving aside the production of new texts), all processes incorporated photography in the middle steps, yet the products varied. A 1950s overview listed seven dominant kinds— microfilm, microfiche, ultra-fiche, microcards, minicards, microlex, and aperture cards (besides a fomenting technology called xerography).⁸⁶⁴ The names unfamiliar to digital-age drama scholars refer to formats favored by technical industries, the military, and business, while humanities projects relied on just three— microcard, microfilm (a strip or roll), and microfiche. Some literary projects did use film strips, as when University Microfilm issued Medina's *Last Days of Pompeii* in its ambitious, mixed-genre *American Culture* series (which included relatively few plays). Yet the film roll was increasingly used for linear, sequential works, notably periodicals (when preserving newspapers—historic or new, local or Soviet—was a key motivation behind the development of microform).

Quite distinct from the roll was the separate sheet, at about six by nine inches large, either on transparent film, a *fiche*, or on card stock—the format used by most micropublishers of old drama. (See appendix T). The card or fiche is designed as a grid of small frames, each frame reproducing in miniature a page of the original document. Readex projects laid out in “decimal” format, ten pages across a row, up to ten rows down the card, but the the grid supplies a *potential* layout; in actuality it gets filled only as far as there are pages in the original—the shorter Dicks' edition fill less than two rows, other *Nick* editions half a sheet, while longer documents spill on

⁸⁶⁴ Chester M. Lewis & William H. Offenhauser, *Microrecording: Industrial and Library Application* (New York: Interscience Publishers, 1956), 37-62, 175-208.

to a second surface. (In paper counterpart, imagine publishers issuing uniform 50-page playbooks, regardless of the length of a work.) In contrast to rolls of film, the separate sheet bore the advantage of structuring by discrete units—one work per card—which allowed users to browse and isolate a title *before* inserting the sheet in the reading machine, rather than scrolling across the film-strip to locate it. (This mattered: a reviewer complained about a microfilm set of Italian drama that it positioned documents helter-skelter, without rubric of nation or date, a vexation to researchers.)⁸⁶⁵ The unit structure also allows the library to add pieces later on, while preserving the set’s logical sequence, or even rearranging it.

Most of the early firms used for the final surface a *paper* card-stock; although film fiche is the far better known in the digital era, it was in fact slower to permeate the US. The cards resemble oversized postcards not only in size, but for their glossy, “calendared” surface. Writings on microform trace the genesis of cards to the concept of a small private northeast college librarian, Fremont Rider, who around the 1940s articulated his visionary scheme: library catalogue cards that would bear the bibliographic data on the face and the actual text, in miniature, on the flip-side.⁸⁶⁶ Like the better-known (and anti-librarian) Vannevar Bush, Rider proffered a vision, not the realizable technology.⁸⁶⁷ Whether affected by Rider or other influences, the scheme was developed along competing byways, although without the identity of the catalogue card. Readex developed a particular production technology which it harbored as proprietary, patenting the printing process in 1939 (a year before Taggart’s *Nick*), and claiming sole rights to the rather generic name “Microprint,” forcing rivals to coin new terms for both

⁸⁶⁵ Beatrice Corrigan, “Italian Drama on Microfilm: Promise and Performance,” *Italica* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 380-87, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/478441>.

⁸⁶⁶ Fremont Rider, *The Scholar and the Future of the Research Library, A Problem and Its Solution* (New York, Hadham Press, 1944). For an encapsulation, see Henry B. van Hoesen in *The American Journal of Philology* 66, no. 1 (1945):109-111; or Kenneth Cmiel, “Libraries, Books and the Information Age,” in *The Enduring Book*, 330.

⁸⁶⁷ Wikipedia and plethora sources describe Bush, whose prescient computer scheme circumvented librarians.

process and product. The Readex procedure harnessed old-fashioned printing—pressing ink onto paper—different from most others, who used the more radically new photographic process for printing texts. To realize this design of miniature relief printing, the publisher contracted a metal engraving company (a historic echo of Gutenberg’s origins in metalwork). Thus the advent of cards was braided from book-selling, photography, librarianship, and an artisanal manual industry, in the context of intellectual property (of technology) and business competition, in the context of a textual market not of general, ordinary readers, but of intellectual specialists.

All card types were classified as *opaque*, in distinction from transparent film surfaces, though separate micropublishing companies assigned separate trade names to their respective formats. (The presence of cards, in fact, compelled the industry to adopt the broader umbrella term, *microform*, while regions that never incorporated cards, notably Europe, maintained the catch-all *microfilm*—one of the regional differences that obstructed the international flow of knowledge, as critics noted.) The opaque format promised several advantages. Though radically different in text size, the paper surface and an old printing process the cards afforded a continuity with and extension of old printed matter, less alien as a vehicle for reading than film.⁸⁶⁸ Given the respective costs of paper and film, too, card offered a cheaper route to copies (though not in capital investment or first production); Readex claimed that old-fashioned printing made their prints cheaper than photographic prints.⁸⁶⁹ Also, since publishers printed on one side only, librarians could ostensibly mark annotations on the flip-side, as they could not on fiche (although none seem to have done so). Overall, card technology emanated promise, provoked excitement, and contended in the market in these early phases.

Yet any micropublisher faced the challenge of recruiting supporters for its format among

⁸⁶⁸ Michael R. Gabriel and Dorothy P. Ladd, *The Microform Revolution in Libraries*, ed. Robert D. Stuart (Greenwich CT: JAI Press, 1980), 22. The book was a contemporaneous guide for librarians, not a social history.

⁸⁶⁹ Readex, brochure.

the many emerging kinds. Each format required separate technology to produce, distinct methods of storage (such as PH), and distinct technology to re-enlarge and read the miniature text. Film formats were advancing, if unevenly, spurred especially by concern for newspapers (as well as by espionage). Allegedly enduring centuries longer than paper, film promised a longevity that card advocates could not claim—and shelf-life was critical in the era facing the ominous crisis of eroding paper, the repercussions of industrial-era bleaching. (The actual longevity, however, was a different story, as film brought its own chemical self-destruction.) Fiche, meanwhile, trickled slowly into the US from Europe; invented in 1940 (under Nazi auspices), twenty years later it was not yet considered “naturalized” in the US, according to a micropublisher,⁸⁷⁰ and even a 1980 account of “new communications technology” described it as merely “growing,”⁸⁷¹ although it would soon surpass the card as the preferred format for separate pieces. Besides *inter-format* competition, there arose *intra-format* competition, especially a contest between two proprietary methods: Readex Microprint versus Microcard, the technology promoted by the “Microcard Foundation” and used by two Kentucky firms, Falls City Microcards and Lost Cause Press (which also published large drama collections).⁸⁷² The contest unfolded in a neck-in-neck race to win subscribers to their respective *Early American Imprints* projects, a contest not only between products, but between incommensurable processes vying for industry dominance.⁸⁷³ (As in the episode of VHS and Beta video competition, these internecine struggles *within* a medium are characteristic of emerging technologies, which complicate the simplistic teleological narratives of sweeping technological histories.) With the American Antiquarian project, Readex

⁸⁷⁰ Lawrence Thompson, “Microforms as Library Resources,” *Library Trends* 8, no. 3 (1960): 362.

⁸⁷¹ S. John Teague, “Microform publications,” in *The Future of the Printed Word: The Impact and Implications of the New Communications Technology*, ed. Philip Hills (London: Francis Pinter, 1980), 135.

⁸⁷² Chester M. Lewis and William H. Offenhauser, *Microrecording: Industrial and Library Application* (New York: Interscience Publishers, 1956).

⁸⁷³ Marcus McCorison, “Into the Unknown in 1955—AAS and Readex,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 115, Part 2 (October, 2005): 279-305.

gained the lead with its proprietary card format, which it maintained for over a decade.

Unlike print anthologies, the Readex project issued facsimiles, rather than retyped texts. Through photography, the image (once re-enlarged) looked like the playbook it copied, conveying the typestyle, the imprint and paratexts, and rips. It also adds shadows, film chemical blotches, an occasional finger, and sometimes a technical editorial note, such as “volume too tight” (see appendix R)—two-dimensional reminders of the process of mediation behind the reproduction. Earlier publishers and book collectors had produced facsimiles, which provoked debate in rare book circles; as noted by Shakespeare digitizer Alan Galey, the technology of text photography emerged at the same time that bibliographers were formalizing their field.⁸⁷⁴ But those efforts were few, often orchestrated for a single work or small collection, and expensive. Microform followed the same interest, but with the advantage of economies of scale in production, and toward a wider array of potential buyers in marketing. Whatever the resemblance between micro-facsimiles and the print sources, however, microforms were not self-evident and self-contained, but needed interactions with external texts in old media. A separate publisher issued a guide to “nineteenth-century drama,” a *de facto* inventory of the Readex set in its 1976 state, in which the compilers indexed publisher series and promptbooks, along with such social categories as character ethnicity and “female impersonations,” *inter alia* (as indexes also index the concerns of their own eras).⁸⁷⁵ Readex editors James Ellis and Joe Donohue of the collection issued another guide within a decade, but still before the set was completed, adding indexes for women authors and typescripts.⁸⁷⁶ Readex sent subscribers check-lists, which usually

⁸⁷⁴ Alan Galey, “Dizzying the Arithmetic of Memory: Shakespearean Source Documents as Text, Image, and Code,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9, no. 3 (January, 2004): para. 6-8, open source, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/09-3/galedizz.htm>.

⁸⁷⁵ Donald L. Hixon and Don A. Hennessee, *Nineteenth-Century American Drama: a Finding Guide* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1977).

⁸⁷⁶ James Ellis and Joe Donahue, *English Drama of the Nineteenth Century, An Index and Finding Guide* (New Canaan, CT: Readex, 1984).

disappeared in the internal files of the institution (though they were catalogued in a German library.)⁸⁷⁷ These print enumerations neither fit in, nor resembled the cards and cartons, heterogeneity different from the unity of digital media.

In the format of separate cards rather than codex, microforms required adaptations of book practices to store, identify, and allow “retrieval” (in library nomenclature) of texts. These surrounding materials and processes are examples of what Gitelman calls “protocols” of a medium, which usually emerge awkwardly, and always by borrowing from the models of prior media.⁸⁷⁸ Readex packaged its cards in hinged-top, red cartons (or “slip cases”), shelved upright side by side, each containing a section of the alphabet sequence, like an encyclopedia volume. (Appendix U shows one set on a library shelf.) In the Readex design, the entire set is split by nation, a series of boxes for England (where New York University placed Dicks’ edition of Medina’s *Nick*), others for American, though other libraries ignored the national division. Having located the microform area, the user scans shelves for the carton labeled *Me-Na*, rests the carton on another surface, opens its lid and finger-walks across the cards to spot the eye-legible header, “Medina, Louisa, *Nick of the Woods*.”

Reading Machines

Then comes the task of reading, a radical departure from textual conventions. All microform requires a mechanism to enlarge the miniature image to legible scale. Like the term *computer* and *printer*, which migrated from human actor to machine, the device was called a *reader*. Machine readers required that librarians undergo training—though their jobs had hitherto involved no mechanics beyond desk lamps—that they in turn would teach patrons one by one. Their work now involved maintaining the machine ordering replacement parts, skills and tasks

⁸⁷⁷ The “Mickroform” checklists appear in the Bavarian Library Network catalogue, www.Gateway-Bayerne.de.

⁸⁷⁸ Gitelman, *Always Already New*, chap. 1.

foreign to Dewey's program. For the institution, the machines required space along with a connection to electricity.⁸⁷⁹ The individual encounter of reading was unprecedented, given the new manual tasks of turning knobs and dials, and the presentation of a text upright on a screen (a smaller, yet more continual version of text on cinema and television screens). Human readers position and focus the text on a plate, and inch the card sideways across a row of miniature pages, then down-and-back to the next decimal row—with hands moving counter-intuitively in reverse (since the image is reflected). Appendix R captures one moment of navigating at the crossroads of four pages, two on each row. The maneuvering differs even from handling microfilm reels; it is unique to reading cards or fiches, and thus mastered by only a few career researchers, and probably rarely comfortably. The reading machines, manufactured by separate (non-publishing) companies and sold through mail-order, came in varied sizes and styles: carrel-style, desktop, to portable “laptop” and hand-held models, each accepting certain formats.⁸⁸⁰ The designs varied and changed, generally shrinking over the years, the virtue of smallness evident in the trade names *Briefcase Reader* and *Microbook Portareader*.⁸⁸¹ Readex manufactured its own *Universal Micro-Viewer*, one of the “hybrid” machines to read multiple formats, its fifth incarnation, which sold for \$375 in 1974. Four years later, the Readex *Opaque Viewer*, model seven, sold for twice that 1974 price.⁸⁸² Opaque cards required a lens structure incommensurable with the type used for film (reflective, not transmitted),⁸⁸³ and thus warranted a separate, dedicated machine, or an elaborate combination mechanism to accept multiple formats.

The demands of optical mechanics complicated a confusing landscape for librarians and

⁸⁷⁹ Gabriel and Ladd, *The Microform Revolution*, chap. 7.

⁸⁸⁰ Hubbard W. Ballou, ed., *User Equipment* (Silver Spring, MD: National Microfilm Association, 1975); and Gabriel and Ladd, *The Microform Revolution*, 104.

⁸⁸¹ Lewis and Offenhauser, *Microrecording*, chap. 7, 241.

⁸⁸² *NMA Guide to Micrographic Equipment*; Alison Harrison Bahr, *Microforms: The Librarians' View, 1978-79* (White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1978).

⁸⁸³ Bahr, *Microforms: The Librarians' View*, 23.

users, which was also a competitive arena for micropublishers; by 1980 over 400 firms would be operating in the US.⁸⁸⁴ The goal in any new Readex venture was of course to recuperate the capital investment of that particular set, besides garnering enough subscriptions to draw profit. But when the medium was not yet settled, microform publishers were also promoting their particular format—and even the efficacy of microform in general—without the advantage of it seeming familiar in everyday life, as books had been and computers would become. The associations and meanings of a medium, that is, interact with technology as it develops (or does not). Whatever the stakes of self-promotion, however, commercial microcard publishers seems to have kept their focus on technology and production, rather than on final use. At the risk of oversimplifying: these scholarly publishers seemed guided by the high-technology ethos of *industrial* capitalism, though they worked in an era transitioning toward “post-Fordist” service economy capitalism, with its expected emphasis on (and exploitation of) consumer experience. (According to an analysis of media industries, the database would be the form to mark the shift “from the means of production as a critical variable in the social order to one based on means of communication.”)⁸⁸⁵ As a key example, early generations of these Readex machines, even that 1978 model, could not print out copies—this when a survey corroborated the hypothesis that what users ultimately wanted was the print-out, to read it the old-fashioned way—and their printing capacity arrived only long after film/fiche machines had already been printing. A proponent of the medium admonished the industry’s neglect on final use, assessing machine reading as not easy, not familiar, not flexible, and not comfortable: “after over forty years of experimentation, innovation, research and development, and advanced technology, we still don’t

⁸⁸⁴ Gabriel and Ladd, *The Microform Revolution*, 92.

⁸⁸⁵ Irving Louis Horowitz, “The Political Economy of Database Technology,” in *Communicating Ideas: the Politics of Scholarly Publishing* (1986; repr. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 55.

know how to make microforms work efficiently.”⁸⁸⁶

Readex Plays Collections

As one of its linchpins, Readex contracted with the US federal publications office for a monopoly on micropublishing government documents, a steady, long-running affair that bolstered the company’s reputation and laid their pathways into library purchasing departments.⁸⁸⁷ Readex then embarked on an enormous drama project, which would set the patterns for the nineteenth-century drama project later. *Three Centuries of English and American Plays* supposedly began as the “brain child” of the English drama academic, Allardyce Nicoll,⁸⁸⁸ who indexed Medina’s and Haines’s versions of *Nick of the Woods* in his landmark study, and who advised the early paper anthologies of American drama. Nicoll served as a kind of broker between the US Theatre Library Association, which would oversee the intellectual tasks, and Readex, which handling financing and manufacture.⁸⁸⁹ Although some accounts of *Three Centuries* attribute its genesis to Boni’s personal interest in drama—he was affiliated with Washington Square players, and had published occasional drama titles—that interested pointed to modern theatre, not melodrama. Microfilm concepts seem instead to have sprung from organizations or scholars, or at least from interchange between the fields. Also, from his view of the industry, Boni probably perceived uncharted terrain in this genre and a viable vehicle in the format of the massive set.

Started in the 1940s, *The Three Centuries* project by 1960 had filled dozens of cartons with thousands of playtexts on cards. From a less clear genesis, Readex began the sequel,

⁸⁸⁶ William R. Hawken, “Making Big Ones Out of Little Ones,” *Library Journal* (October 15, 1977): 2129.

⁸⁸⁷ Kayla Landesman, “Readex Microprint: an Historic Perspective,” *Government Publication Review*, 15, no. 5 (1988), doi: 10.1016/0277-9390(88)90110-0, Elsevier. 463 - 469

⁸⁸⁸ George Freedley and G. William Bergquist, ed., *Three Centuries of English and American Plays: A Checklist. England: 1500-1800. United States: 1714-1830* (New York: Hafner Publishing, 1963); Christina Tuldure Ashby, “The History and Reformatting of Major Drama Collections,” *Microform Review* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 22. Ashby was Managing Editor at Readex.

⁸⁸⁹ Ashby, “The History and Reformatting of Major Drama Collections,” 22.

Nineteenth Century English and American Plays, which would eventually include almost all versions of *Nick of the Woods*. Perhaps less a “brainchild” than a spill-over extension of the prior project (the scope of which crossed into the nineteenth century), the project was shepherded by several drama specialists in collaboration or succession: Allardyce Nicoll, George Freedley (a librarian in the New York Public Library), James Ellis (a sometimes academic who knew the rare books world), and Joseph W. Donohue (a Victorianist at the University of Massachusetts). To accord with the scholarly method of comparing variant texts, Readex strove to represent the triple variations of any one play: manuscript, actor’s edition, and “definitive” publication. Departing from the traditional emphasis on canon and aesthetic hierarchy, the range included authors of all stripes (from well-known to obscure to anonymous), as well as the gamut of quality—or better to say that aesthetic quality was irrelevant. Not all pieces were even plays, strictly speaking, since the set covered a variety of sub-genres that, had Readex begun the project a generation later, would have been more aptly encapsulated as “performance documents.”⁸⁹⁰ The value in this gathering lay not in gatekeeping selection, as for early anthologies, but in scale and comprehensiveness: delivered in compact form, the set offered legions of theatrical texts, a quantity and range that no researcher could feasibly reach by visiting archives and no anthology could encompass. For the publisher, the value of old drama also lay in the lack of copyright fee (which, though moot for the case of *Nick*, may have affected the project’s selection of other works). In its catholic scope, the Readex set came to include all of Medina’s three extant plays—it was the first time all three of her plays were reproduced in a set—together with a large proportion, about twenty items, of works by Haines: one of his *Nick*, multiple versions of his

⁸⁹⁰ The Readex *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays* brochure lists “serious plays, tragedies, historical dramas, parlor entertainments, comedies, comic operas, pantomimes, extravaganzas, satiric comedies, ballets, poetic dramas, amateur plays, black minstrel plays, nineteenth century adaptations of classical, foreign language or older English plays, dramatic adaptations [sic] of novels, melodramas, and opera libretti.” New York Public Library.

more successful titles, and one manuscript. Thus multiple versions, editions, and states of *Nick* were brought into the set: the promptbook autographed by Joseph Proctor; an actor's copy used for a minor male role (Big Tom); Medina's version published by Dicks; Lacy's issue of Haines's version; and the three anonymous submissions to the Lord Chamberlain licenser from the British Library. Only the Harby manuscript was bypassed (perhaps because it was never catalogued as drama).

The separate *Nick of the Woods* plays, like Haines's several plays, were processed and distributed separately, not in one cogent batch. Guided by scholar-editor advisors and the partial listings on bibliographies, Readex visited and filmed on site in one institution after another, each site offering a rich store of plays, and each presumably requiring a distinct negotiation. This institutional archipelago determined the sequence of publication, rather than a bibliographic logic of author name, or era, or country. At the New York Public Library, Readex filmed six hundred works, apparently with some co-publishing arrangements. While accumulating playscripts, Readex marketed *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays* by a particular kind of subscription: institutions received "semi-annual units," each delivering "approximately five hundred" new pieces (costing over \$1000 in later years). The set was not ever-increasing (as Google Books is), nor precisely regular, like a series. The parameters of time and quantity, and even specific contents, remained imprecise (some expected titles never surfaced, while unrecorded titles were found).⁸⁹¹ This indeterminacy did confound some catalogue definitions of dates and format, which remain inconsistent today.

The resulting Readex Nineteenth Century collection teemed with over twenty-three thousand plays—"the most comprehensive nineteenth century drama collection ever produced,"

⁸⁹¹ Ashby, "The History and Reformatting of Major Drama Collections," 23.

as company promotion boasted.⁸⁹² For the arena of drama studies, this seemed to actualize the enormous promise of microform in general, which was extolled as a “revolution” that would not only preserve, but democratize the distribution of knowledge and cultural heritage, delivering a Harvard library to the informational hinterlands—it is difficult to exaggerate the rhetoric of optimism and civic import that characterized trade writings about micropublishing between the 1950s and the advent of desktop computers. Visions of “a whole library housed in a catalogue cabinet” seemed on the brink of realization.⁸⁹³ The enthusiasm is conveyed in the 1980 book title, *The Microform Revolution in Libraries*.⁸⁹⁴ Reviewing the Ellis and Donohue finding aid, The Americanist Walter Meserve praised the Readex set as “the greatest single aid for our generation of theatre and drama scholars,”⁸⁹⁵ and a few years later, another review extolled a cross-genre collection of nineteenth-century documents as “the greatest scholarly publishing project ever undertaken.”⁸⁹⁶ The medium invited superlatives.

Yet, though larger than any anthology or book collection, the set’s sales were modest.⁸⁹⁷ Without wholly failing, the project fizzled, a synecdoche for the course of microform in general. Though installments varied in timing and size, prices were listed as fixed, and they were formidable: in the later phases of production, the existing set cost over thirty-thousand dollars, with each installment priced at \$1,330.⁸⁹⁸ Perhaps Readex negotiated lower costs for some sites, but its distribution seems to correspond to institutional wealth. After many university libraries purchased the first *Three Hundred Years* set, facing the rising costs of journal subscriptions and

⁸⁹² Readex, Brochure (New Canaan, CT: Readex, n.d., ca. 1990s), New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

⁸⁹³ Teague, “Microform Publications,” 136.

⁸⁹⁴ Gabriel and Ladd, *The Microform Revolution*.

⁸⁹⁵ Meserve, Review English Drama of the Nineteenth Century, An Index and Finding Guide, *Theatre Research International* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 199, doi:10.1017/S0307883300006246.

⁸⁹⁶ Quoted in “Comments & News,” *Microform Review*, 21, no. 2 (Spring 1992), 25.

⁸⁹⁷ Herman A. Fussler, “Microfilm and Libraries,” in *Studies in Micropublishing, 1853-1976: Documentary Sources*, ed. Allen B. Veaner (Westport, CT: Microform Review, 1976), 10. 5-21

⁸⁹⁸ Readex brochure.

other constraints, not as many (it seems) added the *Nineteenth Century* set. The lackluster realization was induced by multiple phenomena, an etiology requiring a comprehensive social, cultural, economic analysis. Funding for libraries fluctuated, though at different paces for public and research institutions.⁸⁹⁹ Another identifiable complication was the medium, specifically text surface. When Albert Boni's son took over the firm, after Readex had completed about two-thirds of *Nineteenth Century Drama* on microprint, Readex abandoned its proprietary invention and switched, or "reformatted," to fiche. This conversion pushed the card format toward obsolescence, elevated the price of incoming units, and confronted libraries with an unhappy choice: keep the cards and their reading machines, or switch, for an additional cost (even with the "trade-in" policy), to the fiche set. Some institutions retained the card sets, expanding the uneven distribution, and varied arrangements, across library holdings.

Not all subscribing institutions acquired the full set, unevenness reflected in the different numbers of *Nick* across institutions. The Readex set came to various states, an inconsistency compounded by the different methods of cataloguing microform: some catalogue single pieces, but many do not (and since the set appeared after the National Union Catalogue end-date, it was not represented by any pan-institution listing). The print guide appeared well before the set was complete. The complications of locating titles are compounded by the heterogeneity of institutional shelving policies. *Nick* versions are held in the microform division of Columbia University, where librarians forgo the red cartons to store the card/fiche in metal cabinets lining the walls of a storage area set off from the bank of reading machines in a larger room. (Outsiders may enter the division through certain paperwork and identification procedures). Their reading machines did print out copies—another set of dials and gauges to master—for a cost deducted from a plastic card purchased from a ground-floor vending machine, while other reading

⁸⁹⁹ Cmiel, "Libraries, Books and the Information Age," 335-341.

machines enable saving copies as digital files (as I learned belatedly). New York University holds only the Dicks imprint of Medina's version, which it stores amid the *English Drama* subsection of its Readex set, shelved in the subterranean microform suite. One of the drama librarians of New York Public Library of Performing Arts delivered to me a wide, topless cardboard box, in which hundreds of Readex fiche lay jumbled, testimony to the organizational system and maintenance required by the format of separate pieces (and to the financial decline of the public library). So Readex never became a uniform custom in the community of drama research.

Other Microform Drama

Nick was microfilmed under other auspices, while commercial micropublishers issued an array of drama sets (especially under the rubric of nation/language), which, though not bearing *Nick*, often replicated titles. Drama was incorporated in mixed, sometimes eccentric sets, as when UMI saw Medina's dramatization of a British novel about ancient Pompeii as a fitting index of "American Culture," jostling alongside agricultural pamphlets,⁹⁰⁰ from its film, UMI produced "an authorized facsimile of the original book, printed by microfilm-xerography on acid free paper" (and bound in cloth), perhaps in an instance of print-by-request, one of the channels of distributing microform.⁹⁰¹ While these large microform projects were emerging, institutions were installing in-house microfilming labs to produce copies of their own archive holdings, as did the New York Public Library, which filmed drama in three branches. The Ohio State University, which holds the largest number of microfilm *Nick* copies, filmed (or obtained film copies of) drama holdings from Harvard and other libraries, to supplement its own reputable

⁹⁰⁰ Medina, *Last Days of Pompeii* (New York: Samuel French, n.d.) in *American Culture Series* 1493-1875 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1979), Series 2, Reel 369.006, 107.

⁹⁰¹ Medina, *Pompeii* (Samuel French; microfilm repr. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1978); Abe Books website, accessed February 5, 2012, www.abebooks.com; Customer Relations, 24/7 [Michigan used/rare book dealer], email to author, February 7, 2012. The 24/7 firm's post on Abe Books (an umbrella site) quoted UMI's imprint blurb.

theatre archive; in the early 1990s, it re-filmed those films, enabled by government funding.⁹⁰²

Using Microform

Scholars who were active in the late print and pre-digital era *know* that microform was used extensively for research, and sometimes for reprinting, though these uses were rarely made manifest. The large sets, or even their finding guides, were sometimes reviewed, and general drama bibliographies referred to them as sources for hard-to-find plays. But particular citations appeared rarely, partly for the confusing (and less familiar) situation of handling a facsimile. Though there were bibliographic debates about the position of medium in citations—some called for highlighting the vehicle—ultimately the emphasis stayed on the source edition. Academic citation guides did not insist that researchers acknowledge the microform they used; even at the time of my writing, when we are reminded to identify every digital vehicle, the *Chicago Manual* advises that one name the form of publication “when needed,” partially clarifying that caveat by explaining that “Microform or other photographic processes used only to preserve printed material *need not be mentioned in a citation*. The source is treated as it would be in its published version.”⁹⁰³ For microform, while its reading encounter remains one of the most visible mediations of text, in bibliographic records its mediation is largely invisible.

Microform did not fall extinct; it has not yet been wholly supplanted by a fitter medium, as technological-centric historiography would assume. By 2001, a librarian columnist classified the microprint card under her heading “forgotten media”; in 2008 a Wikipedia entry defined them as “obsolete”; both are apt measures of the view of microform in educated circles, yet both

⁹⁰² WorldCat entry, Medina, *Nick of the Woods*, OCLC: 25817136. OSU’s entry defines the film as “remastered,” and names “a HEA Title II-C Project, 1991.”

⁹⁰³ University of Chicago Press. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16 ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 14.120. Emphasis added.

are overstated.⁹⁰⁴ More precisely, cards belong to the state media scholars call residual—a residual format of a vestigial medium.⁹⁰⁵ Readex still operates; cards and fiche are still held in libraries from Bavaria to the University of Washington. Microform remains more functional (in certain sites) than outdated computer programs, a more thorough extinction described by a scholar whose digital history research requires old operating systems.⁹⁰⁶

Computer to CD-ROM

By the late 1970s, industry insiders saw the inkling of shifts, as in the forecast quoted by a librarian's book on microform: "today's microform may well be the incunabula of the electronic age."⁹⁰⁷ The next medium to deliver drama is one best studied as "media," the digital text, which like any technology saw intermediary experiments before the advent of the forms that normalized. By the mid-1980s, input by punch-cards was supplanted by keyboard-typing data entry, while computers were freed from the main-frame tentacles to micro-computing stations within institutions (and soon to personal desktop computers at home), and operating systems were designed for non-expert users (no longer requiring mastery of DOS encoding)—coalescing in a computer more legible to ordinary users, although one that also required alterations to space, librarian skill, and library practices. As early as 1967, the non-profit On Line Computer Library Center, OCLC, was established expand and coordinate academic computer resources.⁹⁰⁸ By the mid-1980s, industry analysts were referring to "electronic publishing," when the majority of

⁹⁰⁴ Jean Weihs, "Forgotten Media, Part 3: Microforms and the Evolving Miniaturization Craze," *Interfaces column Technicalities* 21, no. 6 (November/December 2001) 7-9; "Microform," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 1, 2008, www.wikipedia.org.

⁹⁰⁵ Charles R. Acland, ed. *Residual Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2007)

⁹⁰⁶ Charles R. Acland, ed., *Residual Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), chap. 1; Terry Harpold, *Ex-Foliations: Reading Machine and the Upgrade Path* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), chap. 1

⁹⁰⁷ Alice Harrison Bahr, *Microforms: The Librarians' View, 1978-79* (White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1978), 101.

⁹⁰⁸ Jay Jordan, "OCLC Operations," *Encyclopedia of Library and Information science*, ed. Miriam A. Drake, 2nd edition (New York: Marcel Dekker 2003), 3: 2238 - 42

products were reference texts or data, and most were aimed at libraries and businesses.⁹⁰⁹ Some of these used computer stations cabled to special dial-up devices (teletext, videotex, videodisc), while developments in plastic, laser, and magnetic tape coalesced in a new form of micro-information, the Compact Disk Read-Only Memory (CD ROM): shallow box cassettes containing discs inscribed illegibly with information that was read (and “only” read) by laser mechanism transmitting data into a computer monitor.⁹¹⁰ Since print publishing had incorporated computer typesetting, conventional publishers could segue into electronic media without intensive reengineering.⁹¹¹ The US dominated these early electronic forays, an instance of the tendency for the developed world (called “first world” then) to control the global market of knowledge sources, as a vociferous scholar, Phillip Altbach, incisively argued.⁹¹² In other regions, print, sometimes still with manual labor for composing, was still cheaper than capital-intensive advanced technology of computers.⁹¹³ But even in the US, access was uneven, with practical and scientific fields better prepared to harness the new technology. For humanities research, the main avenues to old drama were still microform, archives, or slim paths in rare books networks (a lack noted in a 1981 survey of the trade).⁹¹⁴

The story of the emergence of new textual media is a complex entwining of technology, academic publishing, as well as the market in institutions of learning. In the mid-1980s, UMI, then owned by Xerox, transferred dissertations to the CD-ROM platform, as humanities and other scholastic resources were migrating to early digital form. Similarly to what I surmised about microform production, or worse, one critic castigated 1980s CD-ROM producers for being

⁹⁰⁹ Peter Curwen, *The World Book Industry* (New York: Facts on File, 1986), 250.

⁹¹⁰ Christopher Brown-Syed and Terri L. Lyons, “Computing,” in *Encyclopedia Communication and Information*, ed. Jorge R. Schement (New York: Gale/MacMillan, 2002), 72-80.

⁹¹¹ Curwen, *World Book Industry*, 252.

⁹¹² Curwen, *World Book Industry*; Philip G. Altbach. *The Knowledge Context: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution of Knowledge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), xii. Altbach assailed this inequity in several writings.

⁹¹³ Curwen, *The World Book Industry*, 237.

⁹¹⁴ James Ellis, “Book Selling and Performing Arts,” *Special Collections* 1, no.1 (Fall 1981): 113-120.

“blissfully unaware” of use, that is, “ignorant of the detailed way in which their own customers use—or may wish to use—the information and knowledge contained in those products.”⁹¹⁵ J. B. Thompson’s account of electronic publishing recalls that the episode was dubbed the “CD-ROM fiasco,” a cautionary tale about “bells and whistles” of exciting technology distracting from “societal context of use,”⁹¹⁶ though a *King Lear* in 2000 perhaps marked lessons learned.⁹¹⁷ If oblivious to function, electronic publishers were keen to shifting modes of economic exchange. Producers rented, that is, they sold to institutions the subscriptions, so that patrons rented not the disk (or not primarily), but the *intangible* service of legal permission—the model that would dominate commercial digital distribution of databases and other forms under economic logic shaped by service and symbolic capital. By subscription and other aspects, the scholarly digital market underwent a revolution in *process* rather than *product*, according to Thompson.⁹¹⁸

From UMI to ProQuest

CD-ROM marks a transition between microform and digital database, with plays involved at each juncture. Xerox, a public corporation, acquired UMI in 1963,⁹¹⁹ but preserved the name, merging photocopy machine production with textual microfilm, sharing the common denominator of two-dimensional image/text reproduction. UMI, from its base in Ann Arbor, Michigan (the source of the “university” in its name), included Medina’s *Last Days of Pompeii* in its *American Culture* microfilm set. Bought by Bell & Howell Information and Learning, UMI accumulated microform, such as the quirky but important Gerritson Women’s Collection (which

⁹¹⁵ Tony Feldmen, *An Introduction to Digital Media* (London: Blueprint Routledge, 1997), chap. 3, 44.

⁹¹⁶ J. B. Thompson, “US Academic Publishing in Digital..” in *The Enduring Book*, 365.

⁹¹⁷ Kate Newey, “Editorial: The Nineteenth-Century Digital Age,” *Nineteenth Theatre and Film* 35, no.2 (Winter 2008): 3, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/230115718?accountid=10598>. She praises the *Cambridge King Lear CD-ROM*, ed. Christie Carson and Jackie S. Bratton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁹¹⁸ Thompson, 374.

⁹¹⁹ “Publisher History,” ProQuest website, accessed August 2, 2009, <http://www.proquest.com/publisher/pub-history.shtml>.

includes some drama).⁹²⁰ As Bell and Howard, the firm remediated Medina's *Pompeii* to CD-ROM. Across the Atlantic, Chadwyck Healey, a UK print publisher in the 1970s published arcane British-related reference books, such as archive indexes; under joint imprint with a New Jersey firm, Somerset House, it issued monographs about culture and literature; it also produced CD-ROMs, including *The Nineteenth Century* set that drew the superlative praise quoted above. By the mid-1980s Chadwyck-Healey dropped (or absorbed) Somerset and established its own US base in Alexandria, Virginia, where in the mid-1990s it issued *English Verse Drama* on CD-ROM. UMI/Bell and Howard then appeared in that same town, issuing newspapers, dissertations, and other genres in microform and other CD-ROMs.⁹²¹ In the labyrinthine transmogrifications typical of the age of mergers and acquisitions came a fusion of UMI with Bell and Howard with Chadwyck-Healey.⁹²² In the early 1990s, UMI shifted to remote database and document delivery, acquiring control of dissertations, and in the mid-1990s, it began using the vehicle of the World Wide Web as a route for "content delivery" that, as J. B. Thompson's history of digital academic publishing explains, averted the intermediaries and expenses of storage, warehouse, paper, printing, binding, shipping, and customer returns.⁹²³ (The history of the Internet and World Wide Web are sufficiently well explicated to require background here.) In other corners, entrepreneurs experimented with models of marketing electronic books, and even a failed private venture, Net Library, nonetheless demonstrated "a real market among university libraries for academic book content delivered in an online environment," according to Thompson.⁹²⁴

Meanwhile, corporate structure evolved: the UMI-combination came under ProQuest in

⁹²⁰ Gerritsen Collection of Women's History (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1978; Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 1983).

⁹²¹ Michael Rogers, "CD-ROM is Still Shining Brightly at UMI," *Library Journal* 118 (March 1993):20, Library Literature & Information Science Full Text, EBSCOhost.

⁹²² McCorison, "AAS and Readex," 300-301, disentangles some of these relations.

⁹²³ Carol Tenopir, "Database Producers Go Online," *Library Journal* 121, (April 1996): 31, Library Literature & Information Science Full Text, EBSCOhost; Thompson, "US Academic Publishing," 364.

⁹²⁴ Thompson, "US Academic Publishing," 371.

the mid-1990s, according to library news reports, although separate items were issued under each name.⁹²⁵ Unlike the other companies described in this dissertation, ProQuest is not a publisher; it calls itself an “information partner.” Unlike the other publishers and editions, the database has no individual face, no protagonist in its narrative or credentials of an editor. In economic terms, it is constituted as a limited liability company (ProQuest LLC), combining corporation and partnerships in arrangements controlling financial risk (liability). The conglomerate articulates multiple products and importantly, services, encompassing and coordinating a nexus of smaller businesses, or, in its terms, “the ProQuest Brand Family.” (The figure of family invokes the *literal* bonds of nineteenth-century publishers, in the way that industrial-era publishers invoked the imagery of artisan printers before them, as Ronald Zboray noted).⁹²⁶

The ProQuest family spreads throughout academic work, at least in the US. Its online promotion mentions “undergraduates,” and the company, like other database producers, presents promotional material at academic conferences. Outside its digital literature and microform, ProQuest rents a student evaluation program, SIRS (to which I have been subjected); it assumed proprietorship of US theses and dissertations (to which I will be subjected); it rents the bibliography management program RefWorks, the library e-book service ebrary, and libraries’ processing of journals, Serials Solutions® (all of which I have used in this project, some in this very chapter).

While it advances its stronghold on academic digital products, ProQuest runs a sub-division that markets microfilm, called OmniSys World Literature Collection (OWL).

⁹²⁵ Carol Tenopir, “What’s New with UMI?” *Library Journal* 121 (November 1996): 29-30, Library Literature & Information Science Full Text, EBSCOhost; Michael Rogers, “UMI is Now B&H Info and Learning,” *Library Journal* 124, no. 8 (May 1999): 30. Library Literature & Information Science Full Text, EBSCOhost.

⁹²⁶ ProQuest 2008 catalogue, 2, <http://www.proquest.com/assets/downloads/catalogs/databases/ResourcesCatalog.pdf>; Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chap. 1.

ProQuest's promotional material describes the "the UMI microfilm vault," as one of its resources, keeping the UMI name associated with this division. OWL absorbed the large English and American, French, German, and Spanish Drama collections produced by the Kentucky micropublishers that had competed with Readex over card formats (which also issued Medina's *Ernest Maltravers*). ProQuest calls its holdings "the largest commercially available microfilm collection in the world."⁹²⁷ By unknown criterion, it digitized some microform, including Chadwyck Healey's *Nineteenth Century*; others it left as microform, including the Kentucky-made European collections. Like Readex, ProQuest also sells the mediating machinery, "microfilm viewer/scanners that connect directly to a computer" and "bridge the gap between digital and microfilm worlds," though it does not sell computers to accompany its digital texts.⁹²⁸

Across these various arenas, the company tailors the terminology of books and learning. The microform stockpile is named in an older high-tech style, *OmniSys*, but in newer names, the company crafts self-evident labels, *Literature Online*, or colder marketing terms, calling sundry entities "product" and the literary documents "complete texts," or else aggrandizing imagery. These hyperboles reflect the lexicon of corporate trends rather than scholastic traditions phenomena: at the start of a reading session with an ebrary digital book, a pop-up message asks the viewer to wait for "the ebrary experience." The microfilm scanner mentioned above does not merely enable copying documents, but "can open up whole new paths of research."⁹²⁹ To harken to again to the print age, as industrial-era play publishers shed the constraints of gentlemanly status for overt commercialism, the commercial digital "partner" and "brand family" abandons the rhetorical restraint of prior academic publishing, to compose paratexts that are hardly

⁹²⁷ ProQuest 2009 Catalogue, 68, <http://www.proquest.com/assets/downloads/catalogs/databases/ResourcesCatalog.pdf>.

⁹²⁸ ProQuest 2009 catalogue.

⁹²⁹ ProQuest 2008 catalogue, 67, <http://www.proquest.com/assets/downloads/catalogs/databases/ResourcesCatalog.pdf>.

differentiated from corporate capitalist rhetoric used in propaganda for fast food or Broadway musicals (minus exclamation marks). The style did not change when, in 2007, the company was bought by the science-oriented Cambridge Information Group.⁹³⁰ That corporate, service-economy culture and its public discourse is catholic, traversing industries (and regions), as is the leadership: at the time the company was bought by, ProQuest's new Chief Information Officer crossed over from the Ford automobile company,⁹³¹ and the 2011 CEO came from a corporate consulting firm made familiar by another former executive, the US 2012 Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney.⁹³²

Around 2000, the firm began *Literature Online*, which would (by 2003) include Medina's plays, as well as other plays by Haines.⁹³³ For institutions subscribing to the full *Literature Online*, users can click across sets. The drama includes Shakespeare, Welsh Drama, cross-cultural Twentieth Century drama, and "British Drama of the Victorian Period, 1837-1901," which contains six by Haines. Under the umbrella *Literature OnLine*, within the Chadwyck Healey Literature Collection, is the collection called *American Drama, 1714-1915*, which contains Medina's *Nick of the Woods*. Under the inventory of sets, though, also appears the header, *Drama of the American Romantic and Realistic Periods, 1830-1900*, and in one of the cross-links, as *American Drama Full-Text Database*.⁹³⁴ If the structure of the company and inventory is disorienting, the content and rubrics are familiar: the geographic scope is predictable, covering mainly white Anglo countries—with only poetry, not drama, from the West Indies, and

⁹³⁰ Michael Rogers, "Vendors Still Morphing Post-2006," *Library Journal* 132, no. 5 (March 2007): 21-22, Library Literature & Information Science, EBSCOhost. Rogers wrote regularly about ProQuest.

⁹³¹ Celeste Peterson-Sloss and Jamie Babbitt, "People Line and the Executive Profile," *Information Today* 24, no. 8 (September 2007): 49, ProQuest, ISSN 8755-6286.

⁹³² Michael Kelley, Lynn Blumenstein, and Bob Warburton, "New CEO Takes Over at ProQuest." *Library Journal* 136, no. 13 (August 2011): 12, Library Literature & Information Science, EBSCOhost. The firm is Bain Capital.

⁹³³ *Literature Online* (Cambridge: ProQuest, 1996-2012), Duke University Library, <http://gateway.proquest.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu>.

⁹³⁴ Cheryl LaGuardia, Review, "American Drama, 3rd Release," *Library Journal* 129, no. 5 (March 2004): 114. Library Literature & Information Science, EBSCOhost.

nothing from South Asia or diasporic English. Or not yet, anyway: unlike the microform projects, *Literature Online* is not slated for completion. ProQuest calls the flux “dynamic,” while WorldCat identifies it as “continually updated,” a new category to indicate growth without denoting the regularity of a periodical (although the set is sometimes mis-catalogued as *serial*, given that unending quality).

Nick in the Database

The remediation of *Nick* into the digital database transforms the reader’s encounter, a phenomenon well discussed for digital culture in general, and for scholarly projects with strong editorial intervention, notably the online collections of canonical writers’ work.⁹³⁵ A browser reaches the play by a sequence of links and clicks, by finding an author or work in the general library catalogue, or by searching within *Literature Online*. Separate from the all-purpose search field (which one would use to find Telie Doe or Spencer imprints), the search form directs enquiries by fixed categories, each offering a pull-down menu: author name (which is Medina, not Hamblin), author’s time period (nineteenth century), “gender” (by which they mean sex), nationality, and literary category (“American Romantic”). The form adds a field for “ethnicity,” though the database does not recognize Medina as “Hispanic-American.” The menu of ethnicities invites an incisive critique on sociological grounds, as softly suggested by a reviewer, though she extolled the power of the search interface in general.⁹³⁶ Under genre, ProQuest enumerates drama into fifty categories, including melodrama, as might be expected, but also the unusual classification “dramatization of a novel”—although this does not lead to Medina’s play. But one can retrieve the play by searching for author or title. At this juncture comes the hyperlink to the “Author Page,” an addition with resemblance to the anthology introduction, but

⁹³⁵ *PMLA* 122, no. 5 special edition, ed. Wai Chee Dimock (October 2007).

⁹³⁶ LaGuardia, “American Drama”; the scope note explains, “These ethnicities have been selected on the grounds that their cultures have become significant areas of study for literary and cultural scholars.”

different in format and content (and diligence). While Smith changed her surname, ProQuest repositions her lifespan to 1850-1889, starting a decade after her death.⁹³⁷ Unlike anthologies, the database does not bear the deep imprint of scholarship. Like print publishers, though, it articulates intellectual property claims, if confusingly. Various copyrights appear under the catalogue entry, a play's bibliographic information, or the ever present company footer. Although it does not alter enough text to claim a new "edition," it defines the documents as "electronic *versions* of any public domain works" and controls copyright of those.

The paratexts follow old genres, but adopt new technical form. Two trademarks flank the top of the main page, both hyperlinked: the left-side a male lion whose paw steadies an open upright book (the "LiOn" symbolizes to *Literature Online*, and links to its homepage), and at the right, decorated initials CH (for the subsidiary Chadwyck Healey, although it links to the ProQuest web page). Reinforcing the brand identity, the pages are filled by a striking purple-ochre-black color scheme; when the top band disappears as a reader scrolls down the playtext, the wide, purple left margin remains ever-present (which clashes against the playbook's page numbers, colored red). Like nineteenth-century publishers, ProQuest promotes its other offerings in the paratexts in the virtual end pages (the top), where browsers can link to a menu of literature divided by period, or regions, or genres; and on to the full list of drama alphabetized by author, where George Harby's brother Isaac is found not far from Haines.

The drama is rekeyed, not a facsimile reproduction, and the unspoken policy emphasizes text rather than the material form of the source, so the file does not resemble the playbook. Besides the errors of transcription (Nathan "*gases*" on *discovered scalps*), *the version excises* advertisements and catalogues, and it formats Spencer's imprint identically to its own "bibliographic information." The ostensible top page adapts Spencer's title page, with alterations

⁹³⁷ ProQuest, author page for L. H. Medina, *Literature Online*.

that transform the style of its source. Medina's name is listed bibliographically, "Medina, L. H. (Louisa H.)," followed by the print and digital "bibliographic information," though without naming the auspices of the copy. (*Nick* was not, so far as I know, included in the microform sets ProQuest inherited.) The title, while following line-breaks of the original, modernizes typeface (to sans-serif Arial). The alienating effect of these alterations (for those who have handled an old playbook copy) stem from the scholastic emphasis on text, but also from the vehicle, the "standardization of information, presentation, rationalization of the ways such information is delivered, and, above all, consistency," that Horowitz defines as constitutive of the database.⁹³⁸ The designs homogenized all plays and all sections of one play.

ProQuest editorial policy does indicate some aspects of the structure of the source playbook. ProQuest represents by injecting numbers, in brackets, where old compositions began a new line. The numbers tally lines of *type*, functionally different from the numbered lines in poetry and Shakespeare editions that indicate the early layout. ProQuest's measure is lexically different from actors' lines, which can run to numerous type lines. Thus one of Ralph's characteristic "lines" is interrupted to mark the "lines" of type:

[10] Tarnal death to me! I'm a gentleman, and my name's [11] fight! foot and hand, tooth and nail, claw and mud scraper, knife, [12] gun, and tomahawk, or any way you choose to take me. I'm your [13] man! Cock-a-doodle-doo-o-o.⁹³⁹

Starkly different from an actor's part, in this playtext design for school study, actors' lines are interrupted and cluttered by these quantitative insertions.

As elsewhere across the playscript's life, character labels indicate the subtle but significant shifts in medium and editing policy. ProQuest configures a peculiar hybrid of old practices: speech labels are justified at the left, as they were on *Nick* acting editions, yet also

⁹³⁸ Horowitz, "The Political Economy of Database Technology," 49.

⁹³⁹ Medina, *Nick*, act 1, scene 3 (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck Healey, 2003).

given their own line, as in US hand-copied rehearsal scripts but few print editions. In stage directions, character labels are set in regular case, but bold: (*Music. Nathan exit, R. H., with Roland, as Ralph enters, L. H., disguised as an Indian.*). Before speech, character labels are not truncated as in print (where the truncation saved paper and type), but rather are fleshed out to a full word, and going a step further, iterated *again*, in brackets, as the fullest available name: Telie [Telie Doe], or Mrs. B [Mrs. Bruce]. The replacements were inserted algorithmically, automatically, and comprehensively, disregarding local peculiarities or the story's arc. Alan Galey, in his account of encoding Shakespeare, demonstrates how a digital project's protocol fixed a character as a bastard well before his illegitimacy was revealed in the play, an identification that differed from the unstable texts and labels of 1600s folios.⁹⁴⁰ By Medina's period even manuscripts usually stabilized characters, and the acting editions fixed the shape-shifting hero to just Nathan. Yet ProQuest's virtual editor fixes him into one partial identity as "Bloody Nathan," an ironic epithet that represents only the settlers' perspective of the Quaker. Besides than the ontology of fixing, the ProQuest encoding induces hefty redundancy, even absurdly, as in the repetition of a minor character's label,

Woman [Woman]:
[25] Save! O, save my child!⁹⁴¹

Policies intended to facilitate literary reading clutter the pathway while drastically altering the appearance of the text from any prior instance. Square brackets do more work for ProQuest than they did for print publishers, for added text, but even for the page numbers in the original (in case the red color is not enough to demarcate them from dialogue). Graphemes like brackets and numbers foster the sense that this old drama is data.

⁹⁴⁰ Alan Galey, "Shakespearean Source Documents as Text, Image, and Code," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9, no. 3 (January, 2004): 4.1-28, open source, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/09-3/galedizz.htm>.

⁹⁴¹ Medina, *Nick*, act 1, scene 3.

The ProQuest *Nick* bears the hallmarks of digital phenomena, including those Thompson enumerates: speed, access from anywhere, economies of scale, broad choice, the ability to search, and hyperlink (though not the feature of multimedia).⁹⁴² Separate from the template search fields (which inherited categories from print precedent), the pages offer a general, undefined search box, through which users might search for *Shawnees*, or *Spencer*, or *Kentucky* across multiple plays; and searching enables a counting, as I did for instances of music in Medina's plays. As Horowitz noted, the "multi-tiered and multi-tracked" routes to information mark a distinction from prior forms.⁹⁴³ A third digital characteristic is the hyperlink, enabling apparently seamless passages from one location to another. The virtual table of contents expands (by clicking +) from one overarching title, *Nick of the Woods*, into sub-headers, bibliographic information and acts. (Inside the playtext, sections are not hyperlinked.) Galey argues that hyperlinks, because users experience them, have been misunderstood as the essence of digital texts (as in the misnamed "hypertext edition"), when the more defining elements are the behind-the-scenes, so to speak, infrastructures of encoding.⁹⁴⁴ The digital quality extends to reproduction, as users are able to copy and paste and hence manipulate text, without intermediary machine or medium. That act, moreover, is legal, under the copyright clause: "You may create printouts of materials retrieved through the Products via on-line printing, off-line printing, facsimile, or electronic mail," except for commercial use.⁹⁴⁵ (Unlike Samuel French warnings, though, ProQuest's regulation says nothing about stage productions.)

Database Debates

Is the ProQuest drama set a database? The term is included in the product's full name,

⁹⁴² Thompson, 365.

⁹⁴³ Horowitz, "The Political Economy of Database Technology," 46.

⁹⁴⁴ Galey, "Shakespearean Documents as Text, Image, and Code," para. 1-2.

⁹⁴⁵ ProQuest, copyright clause to *Literature Online*.

American Drama Full-Text Database, yet, like archive, its original denotations have become elastic. First appearing in the early 1960s, *database* permeated applied science and business, along with the shorter-lived cognate *data-bank*.⁹⁴⁶ Leaving aside the blank template databases that organizational workers use to enter, systematize, and tinker with data (addresses, prices, or course grades), the kinds in question here convey material generated elsewhere. The first wave carried citations; soon they delivered full content, but in factual texts, especially news and law.⁹⁴⁷ In the humanities the term *database* was used metaphorically before it was used conceptually, and before it was adopted to describe a large electronic anthology of imaginative literature. Sometimes the term is applied as a workaday designation, unproblematically, as when *Literature Online* is routed to the pre-existing Web catalogue division for databases, but it has also entered the realm of literary theory. The compiler/editor of the online Walt Whitman project, Ed Folsom, embraces the celebratory theorizing of the database proposed by Lev Manovich: the database, a genre, is “a latter-day epic” that is now triumphing over narrative, in their pugilistic account.⁹⁴⁸ (Neither writer mentions where dialogue belongs in that binary battle.) Manovich argues that database, much more than a digital format, has become a fundamental cultural form, as narrative in text and film long shaped everyday thinking.⁹⁴⁹

Not all literary theorists agree that an electronic collection of documents *is* a database, or that the database is, as Manovich advances, an ascending “genre” bearing virtues incompatible with narrative. For Meredith McGill, that definition is “premature,” when “when we are only just discovering what databases can do for the study of literature.”⁹⁵⁰ Echoing other media studies

⁹⁴⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), s.v. data.

⁹⁴⁷ Cmiel, “Libraries, Books and the Information Age,” 325. The news and law streams merged into Lexis-Nexis.

⁹⁴⁸ Ed Folsom, “Database as Genre: The Epic Transformation of the Archives,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1578.1571-1579.

⁹⁴⁹ Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), chap 5, sub-section “database.”

⁹⁵⁰ McGill, “Remediating Whitman,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1592-6.

debates, some argue against the historiography of radical rupture: Horowitz sees “nothing qualitatively new in the creation of databases as such,” and according to Peter Stallybrass, the database “rediscovers” such old forms as Bible footnotes.⁹⁵¹ Digital editor Jerome McGann, who, as one of the influential explorers in this frontier, assigned the term “archive” to his Rossetti project, argues that the Whitman project is technically *not* a database (given markup code and interface), and that databases anyway would not serve literary projects.⁹⁵² He also contends that databases are not genre revolutionaries: they do not open texts that were closed (since we have already realized that all texts are already open), but on the contrary they require “the most severe kinds” of categorical forms and hierarchical organizations, and those hierarchies, moreover, translate into narrative. N. Katherine Hayles, who advocates and analyzes literature written for (and experimenting with) digital vehicles, refines the symbolic/technical definition of databases as a closed system based on relationships; while she does delineate its differences from narrative, she sees not conflict, but new symbiosis between them.⁹⁵³

The term *database* most often refers to commercial ventures, and the distinction does bear on our understanding of the form. Irving Horowitz, writing before the literary debates, explained that databases brought change not only in rationalizing information, but by rationalizing *marketing*. Different from the non-profit, university bases of McGann’s archive or Folsom’s database, ProQuest sells its “version” of public-domain texts to institutions; more precisely, it rents access, or license, in exchange for subscription fees. Horowitz concluded that databases costs were excessive, belying the prevalent idea of cost-benefit equilibrium,⁹⁵⁴ an

⁹⁵¹ Horowitz, “The Political Economy of Database Technology,” 46; Peter Stallybrass, “Against Thinking,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1582.

⁹⁵² McGann, “Database, Interface, and Archival Fever,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1588-1592.

⁹⁵³ N. Katherine Hayles, “Narrative and Database: Natural Symbiosis,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1602.

⁹⁵⁴ Horowitz, “The Political Economy of Database Technology,” 45-6.

estimation reinforced by the topography of ProQuest subscriptions dotted mainly by affluent institutions. (Neither my public university nor the city's public library subscribe). Subscription fees, and by proxy the institution's prompt for an affiliate's password—a manifestation of legitimate association—act as the gateway in the electronic flows (the very term is part of its electronic address: <http://gateway.proquest.com>). Price and guarded access distinguish this remediation from a university project, a non-profit effort, or a corporation that makes documents public but accrues profit by other means, the fora discussed next.

Google *Nick*

Google Books digitized *Nick* in 2009, using the Spencer imprint held by Columbia University in its circulating stacks.⁹⁵⁵ Like the *Ernest Maltravers* it had digitized years before,⁹⁵⁶ Google's *Nick* is a photographic facsimile, not a re-keyed text, a reproduction bearing no scholarly apparatus. Below the shrunken facsimile appears reference texts: a cluster of keywords culled from the text (in randomly varied, rather than statistically proportional, font sizes), followed by bibliographic information. Google conveys the document to the public web, for free, while the company hyperlinks at left (Abe Books), and thumbnail book covers below (*Hamlet*), are the advertisements that accrue Google's profit associated with this venture. A phrase search will return small windows bearing passages from numerous pages, but except for the miniature playbook title-page, Google's *Nick* does not open into full pages. Even the penetrable books allow only limited exposure, as a phrase explains: "pages 70 to 300 are not shown in this preview." But for viewers puzzled by the impenetrable *Nick*, Google presents the hyperlinked question, "Where's the rest of this book?" which leads to an explanation of its "partner program"

⁹⁵⁵ Medina, *Nick* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, n.d.), Columbia University, digitized February 18, 2009, Google Books, <http://books.google.com>.

⁹⁵⁶ Medina, *Ernest Maltravers* (New York: Samuel French, n.d.), digitized May 18, 2007, Google Books, <http://books.google.com>. Google also digitized a Dicks edition (auspices unidentified) and Kritzer's anthology.

policy. Explaining that the institutional partner determines the parameters of public access, Google Books also disabuses the thought that it might broker any illicit access, since its function is ‘to help you discover books and assist you with buying them or finding a copy at a local library.’⁹⁵⁷ Neither store nor “local library” is indicated for the *Nick* from Columbia University. And while the “rest of this book?” passage suggests that the restrictions correspond to copyright status, intellectual property does not explain the prohibition of *Nick*’s content. Still, even that small portion is mobile, as other public sites then import—or connect to—the Google digitized file. It re-appears, for example, within the “digital library” Haitha Trust, a partner-based online project “working to ensure that the cultural record is preserved and accessible long into the future.”⁹⁵⁸

Google Books, as well as its search engine, have become infamous as subject of contentions discussions, especially in book history and media circuits, percolations that reach the popular press, and so need little accounting here. One critic, Jonathan Freedman, wove his assessment into his response to Folsom’s database theory in the *PMLA* special issue. Freedman expresses skepticism toward Google’s “totalizing ambition” and its celebratory rhetoric (“cool technologese”) about a free information society, which in aim and scope, as well as the “self-valorizing” quality, strike him as distinctly American (and also as like Whitman).⁹⁵⁹ Google Books’s “cloak-and-dagger quality” in the ways it acquires and processes books seems for Freedman antithetical to ethos of transparency attributed to digital culture.

Non-Profit Digital Drama

⁹⁵⁷ “Why can’t I read the entire book?”, Google Books Help web page, accessed March 9, 2012, <http://support.google.com/books/bin/answer.py?hl=en&topic=9259&answer=43729>.

⁹⁵⁸ Medina, *Nick* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, n.d.), digitized Google Books; repr. Haithi Trust, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007025121>; Haithi Trust, accessed January 6, 2012, <http://www.hathitrust.org/about>.

⁹⁵⁹ Jonathan Freedman, “Whitman, Database, Information Culture,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1596-1602.

More harmoniously with that open access vision, at least still in 2012, other public web projects present drama in Web venues. The only *Nick* instance is part of a university's special project. A page of Harby's manuscript is displayed in a library's online site,⁹⁶⁰ the virtual reproduction of a theatre exhibit (the only such display in the lives of *Nick* scripts). Though University of Virginia's special collections has no specialization in drama, the presentation is informed by theatre history, with a passage explaining R.M. Bird's novel and Medina's dramatization, as well as a playbill featuring Joseph Proctor, though less about the writer it calls "Harley." The exhibit scrolls on to other plays and other genres of documents, offering an introductory overview and sampling for the general reader. Other university sites are aimed for specialist researchers. *The Victorian Plays Project*, somewhat more modestly than its title suggests, contains 350 acting editions of the London play publisher, T. H. Lacy, from 1848-1873, including *Alice Grey* and *The Idiot Witness* by Haines.⁹⁶¹ A Great Britain cooperation, Victorian Plays Project is housed in the National University of Ireland; the copies come from the Central Library of Birmingham; and funding came from a government council. The project produced PDF-file facsimile of *text*, but not the physical page; while the text retains Lacy's style, the playbook's dimensions, or wear-and-tear, are not discernible, and (since the sources were bound by the library) wrappers and end-page matter are absent—the focus is, as elsewhere, on *plays* rather than *play-books*. Like ProQuest, the interface enables searches by the standard fields *title*, *author*, or *year*, and encoded keywords, but it also offers fields for cast members and specific stage directions (for example, the "aside"), an indicator or the editors' attention to particular features of theatre and period. Those editors' interventions in the dramatic text are

⁹⁶⁰ "In the Brilliancy of the Footlights: Creating America's Theatre," Albert H. and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library, accessed April 8, 2008, <http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/exhibits/theatre/idea.html>.

⁹⁶¹ Victorian Plays Project, <http://victorian.worc.ac.uk/modx/>

indicated by yellow speech-bubble symbols (in the preliminaries of *Alice Grey*, the bubble notes that the surname is “spelt” differently, as *Gray*.)⁹⁶²

Outside universities (though not without relations to them), Project Gutenberg issues some lapsed-copyright drama in its growing inventory of multiple genres and (European) languages. The site began by conveying only rekeyed texts, though it has incorporated digitizations (facsimiles). Like the Victorian Plays Project, it is called only Project Gutenberg, not archive or database, though the documents are called *e-books*. At no charge to readers, and without advertisements (excepts its own notices), Gutenberg ebooks come in a variety of file formats, including text-only or hypertext markup language, HTML (the modes I understand), while offering “mirror sites” and adapting to recent hand-held gadgets. Given its non-profit mode of operating (through “hundreds of volunteers”), Gutenberg has been slower to enter books than Google. Its choices, moreover, following the proportions of literature in school and trade spheres, have favored other genres over drama, and quality canon drama—Shakespeare, Goethe, and Wilde—over minor plays. One finds the 1854 edition of Bird’s novel, but not a dramatization by Medina or Haines.⁹⁶³ More playbooks appear through the auspices of Internet Archive, another non-profit project launched in the mid-1990s with a different mission, to preserve “historical collections that exist in digital format”—documents subject to digital death—in order to convey them to “researchers, historians, scholars, people with disabilities, and the general public.”⁹⁶⁴ Besides “moving images,” audio, and virtual snapshots of former Internet pages (the Wayback Machine), Internet Archives connects to the files on Project Gutenberg, and to other drama digitized onto public vehicles. Like Project Gutenberg, the Internet Archive posts Bird’s novel,

⁹⁶² Haines, *Alice Grey* (London: Lacy, n.d.), Victorian Plays Project, <http://victorian.worc.ac.uk/modx/assets/docs/pdf/Vol44iAlice.pdf>.

⁹⁶³ Bird, *Nick of the Woods* (1854; repr. Project Gutenberg, 2004), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13970>.

⁹⁶⁴ Internet Archive, accessed September 7, 2011, <http://archive.org/about/about.php>.

but not a dramatized *Nick*, though it also has two plays by Haines: *Alice Grey* and *My Poll*, transmitted from separate universities (California and Toronto).⁹⁶⁵ Unlike the re-keyed texts or clean digitizations, both show the aged paper surfaces.

Digital Studies

Studies of digital literature and social forms resonate with some but not all qualities of the instances of e-*Nick*. The literary analyses tend to seek affinity between their selected author's work and digital phenomena: Whitman and databases "zig and zag," in Folsom's eyes; Shakespeare "consciously practiced his own form of database" according to Stallybrass, while his phrases, for Galey, aptly describe digital effects.⁹⁶⁶ The correspondence of literary and media forms seems unlikely, or risible, for the case of *Nick of the Woods*—does Nathan hyperlink to Nick?—a difference that highlights the particularities of remediated melodrama, or unrespectable literature. In general, writings about digital literature are not referring to outmoded drama as commercial products, as the sociological concerns with virtual community and on-line identity point in other directions, and, in the post-human reincarnations of Marshall McLuhan, other post-structural media analyses argue that the new technological communication forms radically reconfigure fundamental categories and practices.⁹⁶⁷ Without dismissing these stimulating arguments in general, for this analysis of digital playscripts it seems prudent to delineate modes of encounters. For the digital database, the user assumes a pre-defined social position, librarian, faculty, student, which, while changing in relation to the computerization of education, comprises a specific relationship to an institution, as manifest in identification cards and

⁹⁶⁵ Haines, *Alice Grey* (London: Pattie, n.d.), Internet Archive, <http://archive.org/details/alicegreysuspect00hainrich>; Haines, *My Poll* (London: Cumberland, n.d.), Internet Archive, <http://archive.org/details/mypollmypartnerj00hainuoft>.

⁹⁶⁶ Folsom, "Database as Genre," 1578; Stallybrass, "Against Thinking" 1581; Galey, "Shakespearean Documents as Text, Image, and Code," quotes *Hamlet* in his title ("dizzying the arithmetic") and argument.

⁹⁶⁷ My paraphrase is a promiscuous generalization of a wide swathe of studies, such as Mark Poster, *Information Please: Culture and Politics in the Age of Digital Machines* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

passwords. If selves are changing at large, these changes are colored by the mode of activity, whether leisure or school work, and mediated by institutions and larger economic arrangements.

In much of the scholarship on digital humanities, the favored moment for scrutiny is the user encounter, akin to audience and reader reception. The material dimension of that interaction, and the materiality behind it, is often ignored. Although Stallybrass, with Margreta de Grazia, highlighted the ingredient of urine in early modern ink in their call to attend to materiality, entwined with a challenge to categories of work and author, the plastic casing of computers is neglected as an ingredient in the digitization of those old pages and not integrated into thinking about literary categories.⁹⁶⁸ Like urine and paper, monitor glow and batteries evoke cultural meaning and are part of the electronic-social network through which texts circulate. The digital document is not immaterial, but constituted by artificial light interacting with nano-artifacts and (still) used by manual interaction with three-dimensional machinery. Although these things are not determining, they are part of the matrix (or actor network) that constitutes the digital, cultural situation, and like paper and binding, they are not inert entities void of culture, but themselves resonate significance, if quietly. In the way Theatre Studies has neglected the materiality of theatre work that is *common* to other spheres in society, humanities or sociological analyses of computerized culture extract the more *particular* feature—the game or literary experiment or online “archive”—while taking as given the general vehicle, the computer. There are forays into the workings enabling those encounters, as when Jerome McGann insists that interface produces meaning, or Alan Galey insists on paying attention to behind-the-scenes operations of the digital medium—platform and file formats, among others—in a digital literature equivalent to theatre’s page-to-stage analysis.⁹⁶⁹ But broadly speaking, digital literature studies followed the cultural

⁹⁶⁸ Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, “The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text,” 281.

⁹⁶⁹ Galey, “Shakespearean Source Documents,” para. 1-2.

studies currents away from *production* (of the older Marxist materialist myopia), toward *consumption*, abandoning the topics of making and marketing—labor and limited liability, besides the destination of electronic waste. This tide parallels the shifting emphases of information industries from the means of production to consumer experience, the encounter. The dimension of price, and the financial arrangement of access, the geopolitics of the digital divide, also informs the encounter. Money, in simple terms, is often absent from discussions about electronic literature, many of which revolve around university-based or public-access projects, rather than commercial products.⁹⁷⁰ Financial prohibitions contradict the touted virtues of democratic dissemination and, for Web-based programs, its anytime-anyplace accessibility. The critic of international inequity of knowledge resources, Philip Altbach, insists that “the means and structures of dissemination are of critical importance” as social and economic forces are driven increasingly by knowledge.⁹⁷¹ There are approaches that re-articulate production and material without resorting to crude Marxism, such as Actor Network Theory and economic anthropology’s “biography of things” (as articulated by Arjun Appadurai), or geographers’ “commodity chains,” which describe “complex webs of relationships” that from production to consumption.⁹⁷² Beyond the specific case of ProQuest, all digitized drama, and the ethos of democratic, “free-flow” rhizomic distribution of knowledge-information,⁹⁷³ relies on machinery, the socialized materiality and trajectories of physical resources, human labor, and money, that should be enfolded into a fuller account of phase in the lives of playscripts.

Feedback Books

⁹⁷⁰ *PMLA*, special edition, 122, no. 5 (October 2007). This special issue on the digital literary “archive” or “database” scarcely mentions economic dimensions (apart from the subject of copyright).

⁹⁷¹ Philip G. Altbach, *The Knowledge Context: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution of Knowledge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), xii.

⁹⁷² Deborah Leslie and Suzanne Reimer, “Spatializing Commodity Chains,” *Progress in Human Geography* 23, no. 3 (September 1999): 410-420, ProQuest, doi:10.1191/030913299677651165.

⁹⁷³ Alan Luke and Cushla Kapitzke, “Literacies and Libraries: Archives and Cybraries,” *Curriculum Studies* 7, no.3 (1999): 478.

In 2001, *Nick* appeared as a booklet produced through copy-shop materials by a small, provincial firm, Feedback Theatrebooks and Prospero Press, the project of a retired theatre scholar who had taught in the City University of New York. The return to print seems odd, in the age of the digital conglomerate information partner, yet the do-it-yourself aspect of re-keying, photocopying, and selling by web-site characterize the digitized, global economy, and the state of textual cultures and markets. While the trend in late capitalism is the merger-acquisition toward large corporate structures, the technologies that enable the massive also engender small businesses, which arise in the interstices of corporate companies. Perpetuating the tradition of print publishing, latter-day “cottage industries” reproduce playbook commodities in small batches. By scanning or re-keying old playbooks, or transferring microform, or downloading from a digital database, these postmodern chapmen repackage a play and peddle it in online used and rare books markets through post and courier service. Some operate by a print-on-demand basis, a mode initiated by microform companies that spares publishers the onus of stocking inventory. Plays by John Haines were recently offered by these means, the reprints ranging from five to twenty five pounds (“beautifully bound in brown cloth covers featuring titles stamped in gold”), from dealers spanning the globe: *Alice Grey* was offered from both Australia (AussieBookSeller) and India (Repressed Publishing LLC).⁹⁷⁴

Feedback Theatrebooks and Prospero Press is a small antiquarian book company (“specializing in pre-World War I American Plays”) based in a port town in Maine, run by the retired theatre scholar Walter Meserve, years after he wrote the review of the Readex set cited above. Like acting editions it contains a single play and spans a similar size, but its materiality reveals the era: a transparent plastic cover (actually two separate end sheets), and a plastic spine binding (the centipede kind that pinches rectangular holes in the margins). The pages are not

⁹⁷⁴ Abe Books (UK) website, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://www.abebooks.co.uk>.

gathered, but each is cut from half a regular 8 ½ by 11 sheet (a twenty-first century folio). Those plastic components, as well as the laser-printer, paper slicer, and hole-punch, were presumably on hand in a well-equipped office, or used in the closest copy-shop. (See appendix U.) The rekeyed playtext uses a more generous typeface size than Spencer or Dick's—like Smith's anthology entry, Feedback's *Nick* offers a more comfortable read (and perhaps ample margin space for a promptbook). Accommodating readers, too, the edition recasts character labels in both capitals and bold, while allowing Roland all letters of his name, and, like the anthologists, drops stage position acronyms.

Meserve's background in theatre research is legible on the document, though it does not define the book as scholarly—he seems to design the book for hobbyists, or community theatres, rather than cultural studies courses. He reproduced the advertising woodcut template, the image depicting Medina's renowned cascade scene, on the pale green cover page. (While the advertising poster saw several reprints, the Telie-Roland picture from the Dicks' cover has not been recycled.) Though unconcerned with the apparatus of footnotes or editorial policy, Meserve did insert a general introduction about Miss Medina, recycled verbatim from his older scholarly writings (he had been one of the first to write about melodrama and her). But the gesture of academic protocol did not extend to citation; the booklet bears no trace of the source specimen. (Given the firm's traffic in rare books, they may have used an old playbook, borrowing the illustration from the Dover reprint; though details suggest that they copied from Smith's anthology.)⁹⁷⁵

The work standards seem relaxed, even as the firm's status as a business is evident. The first preface sheet is reversed, verso on top. (Like print-era piracy, this irregularity hurts the

⁹⁷⁵ *Advertising Woodcuts from the Nineteenth Century Stage*, Stanley Appelbaum, comp. (ca. 1875; repr. New York: Dover, 1977), 28.

field's reputation, as other dealers know: the Indian dealer Pravna Books asserts that "A lot of effort has been made to check and improve each page/scan manually for its quality of text" of Haines's *My Poll*.)⁹⁷⁶ Also like nineteenth-century publishers, Feedback Book adds its own paratexts, installing its own series name (*Americana*), redesigning the cover, and filling the title page verso with the elements typical of new books: the country of "manufacture," an ISBN number, credits for book design and the illustration, and multi-level copyright claims for the preface, the reservation of all rights, and the standard US warning that whole or part may not, without permission, "be utilized or reproduced in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic," nor touch virtual shelves or vessels, that is, "any information storage and retrieval system."⁹⁷⁷

The precision of the claim and the elaborate legal protocol it represents contrasts starkly with the obfuscation of the book's source, as if Meserve inherited the practices as well as the texts from the machine-press era. Like his forebears, he advertises other wares in end pages, other pre-War World I plays, and cookbooks, followed by an order form. My own copy came through the post not directly, but from a digital and financial exchange with a small intermediary seller (for over three times Meserve's \$5.95 list price). With the cheap functionality of backstage scripts, the common materials of contemporary textual culture, the pedagogical apparatus of a preface, a commodity exchange value realized over the web, and the contents of outmoded melodrama—the plastic-covered booklet encases an array of the themes that resonate with other moments in the lives of *Nick of the Woods* playscripts.

⁹⁷⁶ Pravna Books (India), advertisement, Abe Books, accessed February 1, 2012, www.abebooks.com.

⁹⁷⁷ Copyright clause on *Nick* (Brooklin, ME: Feedback Theatrebooks, 2001), cover page verso.

Conclusion

In the late era of laptops and postmodern theatre, *Nick of the Woods*, long retired from its half-century of earnest production and decades of stage parody, seems mainly static. Copies lie scattered across learning institutions, some in library stacks, in the form of single playbooks, publisher series, or Smith's *Victorian Melodramas*, and others in special collection storage, besides the holdings on microform and the digital purveyance through Google or ProQuest. Medina's version far outnumbers Haines's, in extant copies and remediations; the anonymous versions submitted to the Lord Chamberlain are archived in one London site or else found rarely in the few US libraries that purchased that Readex unit. Taggart's version saw surprising reach and endurance, even into microform. Harby's and the Dark Horse script remain in the form of unique copies, except for the paper or digital reproductions obtained by researchers. Some libraries hold just one embodiment, such as several United Kingdom universities (or my own) that acquired only Smith's *Victorian Melodrama* anthology, or Spain's and New Zealand's campuses that subscribe to the ProQuest database, or a Japanese university that has bound Medina's play with Shakespeare's. A few affluent institutions hold copies in multiple forms, so that acting edition, anthology, microform, and database can all be found in Columbia and Harvard Universities. How can we encapsulate this uneven, scattered distribution? The current images of circulation, rhizome, or virus (viral), seem inadequate, so I am left still groping for nomenclature, as I am for other moments in the lives of playscripts. However named, the jagged array of *Nick*, in multiple versions, editions, imprints, states, and media, places in several kinds of collections across the economically-advanced world also describes the populations of sundry other playscripts—especially handwritten dramatizations in the era of loose copyright.

In the early twenty-first century, *Nick* comes to another era of small motion for the material texts, as in a few feasible (if hypothetical) scenarios: students in a “Women and Melodrama” course read the ProQuest database *Nick*; a rare book dealer sells an old acting edition over the Internet; a scholar transcribes Harby’s *Nick* in a project about the Harby brothers’ drama; or librarians relocate playbooks from circulating stacks to rare books division, off-site storage, or book-sale carts, making room for the digital learning commons. If theatrically revived in colleges or communities, *Nick* could be copied, altered, annotated with prompt-notes, and memorized by actors from hand-held electronic devices (when acting script practices become as digitized as theatre’s “tech booth,” or audio-visual processes). Across these varied contexts, *Nick* would maintain its status as an old, outmoded play.

Apart from the presence of playscripts, the *representation* of, or *reference* to *Nick* plays and playwrights undergo other small movements. Medina draws attention for having been a woman playwright (inducted to the virtual Theatre Hall of Fame),⁹⁷⁸ carrying the oeuvre with her. *Nick* has been analyzed and taught for its role propagating ideologies of nation and race. The playscripts are listed on catalogues, which become transfigured into the next new digital program, interface, or platform. Representation is linked to reproduction in the catalogues of database subscribers, which hyperlinks directly to the ProQuest *Nick*, or any public digitized facsimile—an efficiency beyond Freemont Rider’s microcard dreams. Yet in these migrations, the remediation complicates the playscript’s representations, in ways manifest, for example, in the online library catalogue of a prestigious US research university: one entry for Medina and *Nick* (an e-book) hyperlinks to the digitization of Bird’s novel; another entry labels the document a thesis/dissertation but links to the ProQuest database; and a third, which also hyperlinks to

⁹⁷⁸ Caldwell Titcomb, “Theater: New Hall of Fame Members Inducted,” *The Arts Fuse*, February 10, 2009, accessed March 2, 2009, <http://www.theartsfuse.com/2009/02/10/theater-new-hall-of-fame-members-inducted-2/>. The Hall of Fame yearly inducts eight persons with “a record of outstanding achievement spanning at least 25 years.”

ProQuest, names Lord Bulwer-Lytton as secondary author and cross-reference (as he is for Medina's *Ernest Maltravers*).⁹⁷⁹ Each node in the ostensibly seamless digital flow condenses a host of information, which is not made infallible by database algorithms, nor is it simplified by corporate structure.

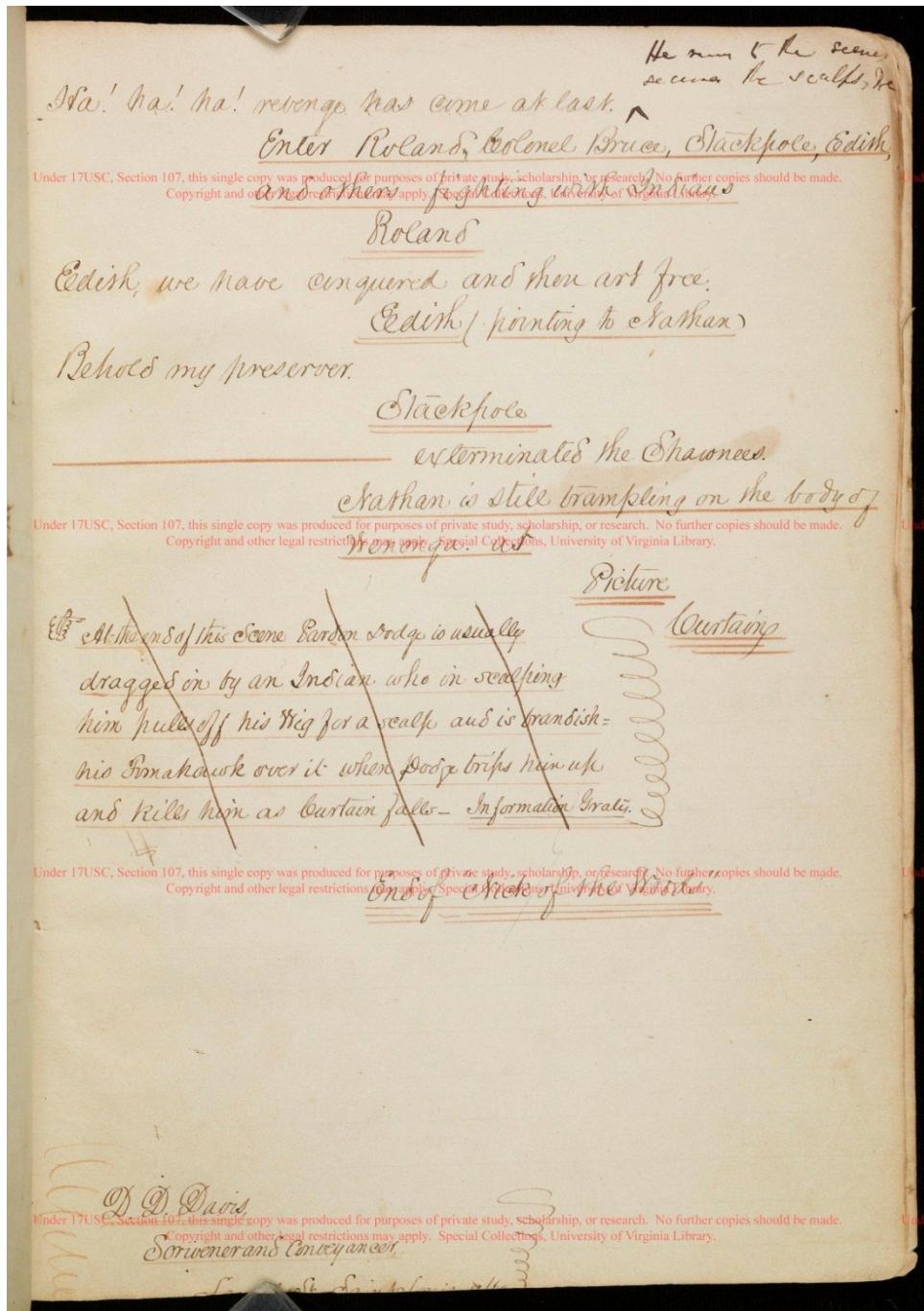
The Life of the Playscript

What does tracking the life of one play achieve? For its chronology, the case of spectacle melodrama highlights the development in industrial-era capitalist publishing and beyond. Approaching the history of dramatic literature from the angles of book history (interlaced with media history and anthropology), the trajectory demonstrates that a playscript is more than a vessel of symbolic meaning of the playtext-proper. Across myriad practices, through varying spheres, and over time, the script embodies diverse qualities and degrees of value: use, exchange or commodity, gift, symbolic, sentimental, and intellectual. The content, the dramatic text, matters in different ways in each juncture, often for the overall sub-genre rather than the particular drama; but the variables of material form, site, and practices have large bearing on its identity. In the simplest terms, the life narrative demonstrates how the playscript becomes *a different kind of thing*, phase by phase. The arcs of the scripts' trajectories reveal the complexity and multiplicity of a script's routes, and of the forces acting on them. What propels changes to a playscript's identity is not a single phenomenon—whether author's intention, aesthetic quality, message, medium, or national *zeitgeist*—but an amalgamation of variables, all historically contingent. A playscripts movements are driven by interaction between factors, material and cultural, physical and ideological (or base and superstructure)—interactions not limited to one discrete site, but spreading across social networks and between social spheres. The textual practices involved in its course are related to textual media, from inkwell to internet, that

⁹⁷⁹ Bird, *Nick*, Internet Archive, Accessed May 5, 2011, <http://archive.org/details/nickofthewoods13970gut>.

circulate through the entire society, in offices and ordinary life, well beyond the realm of theatre. The passages of playscripts thus link separate spheres, and so integrate theatre within society. Still, any document is particularized in one sphere through varying modes of mediation, and theatre's material text supplies one close-up case in which to examine this interaction of local and general processes. A playscript takes on identity through physical, social and conceptual mediations—the physicality of rag-based paper, the layout of title pages, the semiotics of prompters' codes, catalogue categories, microform readers, digital hyperlinks, and the economics of price, *inter alia*. The matrices of practices, materials, and values produce, reproduce, and represent a script as various entities, whether workaday document, Americana antique, dramatic literature, or research data. Finally, the long lives of playscripts illuminate the material and social histories of our sources themselves. In the late phases of a long trajectory, *Nick* scripts do not return to the original sphere of theatre, like a novel in one generation of a book history circuit; nor do they it wander across social spheres, like the circumambulations of capital or concepts. Less dramatically, through libraries and digital forms, outmoded drama is routed to us, contemporary scholars; and hence this account of playscripts' histories enfolds our own work—the things we do with playscripts—into their social lives.

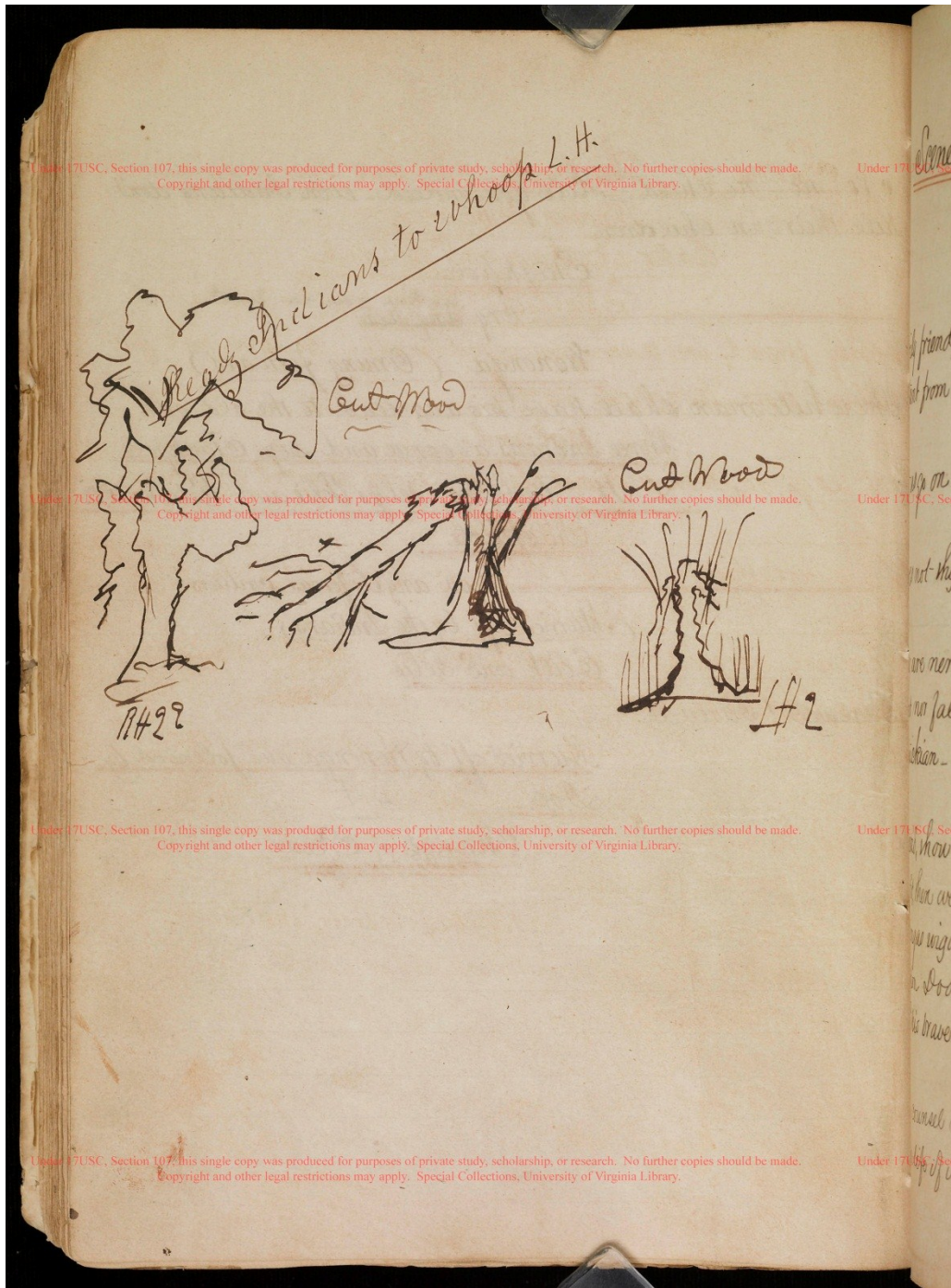
Appendix A



Harby Nick MS promptbook
Signed by D. D. Davis, scrivener and conveyancer.

George Washington Harby, *Nick of the Woods; or, Kentucky in '82*. Act 3, scene 3, final page.
n.d., ca.1838-43. Clifton Waller Barrett American Literature collection, Small Special
Collections, University of Virginia Library.

Appendix B



Harby Nick prompt sketch and note for "whoop."

Act 3, scene 1.

Appendix C

Edisk

Heavens! Brasley dead, and you my deliverer. Oh god,
 good old man.

Brasley

I am dying - one word - the will - here it is - take it, all
 is yours. (Gives the will to Edisk - Dies)
 Great report of rifle. Indians yell &c.

~~Scene IX~~ ~~Enter~~ ~~Edisk~~ ~~Brasley~~

~~Change - Change of scene~~
 When Bloody Nathan pulls Wenonga out ~~Change~~

~~Scene III~~ ~~Enter~~ ~~Wenonga~~ ~~Nathan~~ ~~opposite side~~
 (Enter Wenonga & Nathan opposite side)
 Nathan catches him by the throat)

Nathan

Dost thou know me? Wenonga look - dost thou know
 me?

Wenonga

Yes, you are the man of peace. Wenonga's hands are
 stained with the blood of your children.

Nathan

Look again! Behold in me the "Sibbainesag"

Wenonga

No!

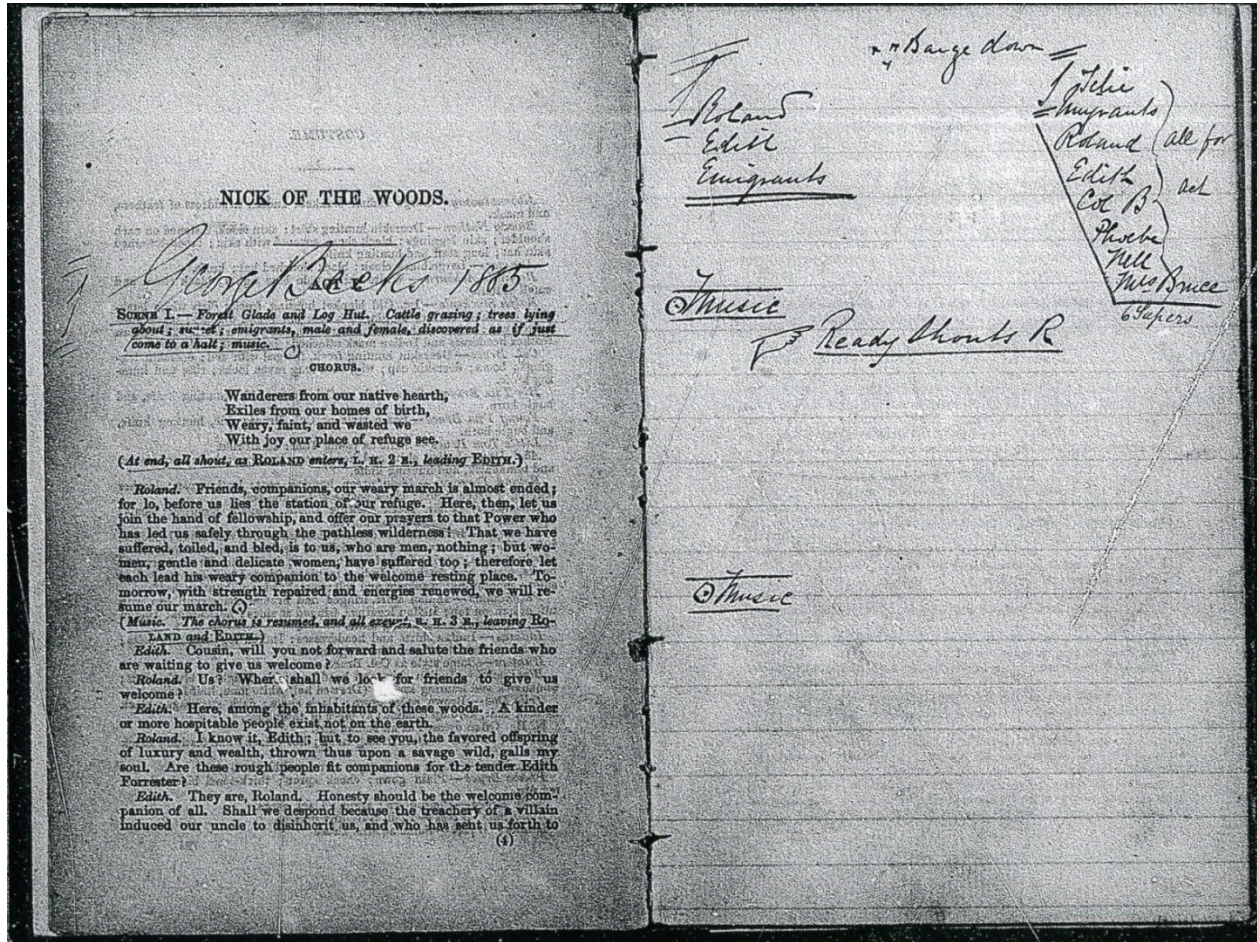
Nathan

Yes, - my mark hath been on many of thy tribe, now take it
 thou. Die, die, die, thou destroyer of my family. (Stabs him
 through him to the earth and tramples on
 him)

Harby Nick prompt redactions and manicule.

Act 3, scene 3.

Appendix D

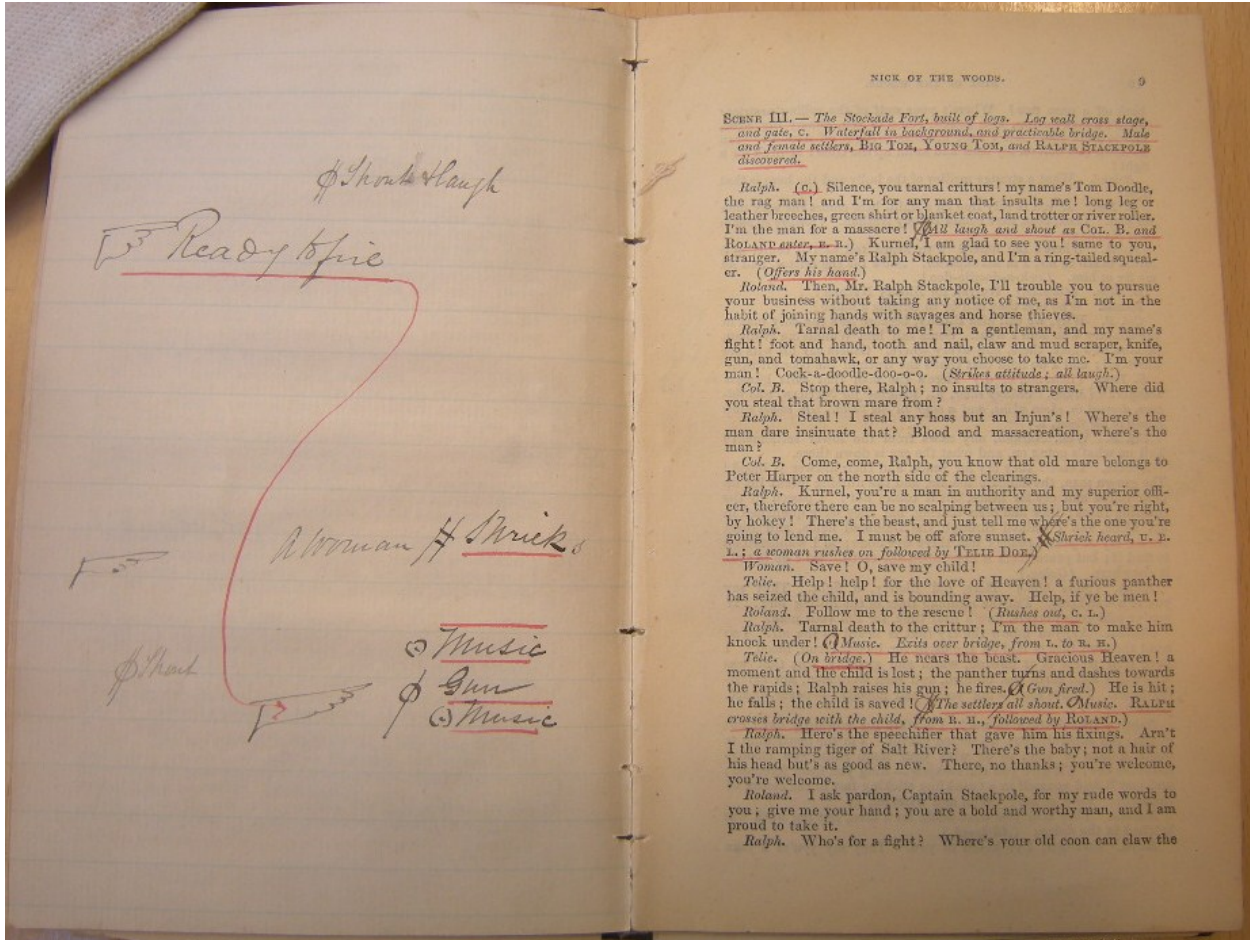


Medina Nick, Promptbook

Signed by George Becks, 1885.

Louisa H. Medina, *Nick of the Woods*. New York: Samuel French, n.d., ca. 1860-1872.
Act 1, scene 1. Becks Bequest. New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. Microform reprint from *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, n.d., ca. 1968-1990.

Appendix E



Medina Nick Becks promptbook

The prompt marks prepare for and signal shrieks, shouts, gunshot, and music.

Appendix F

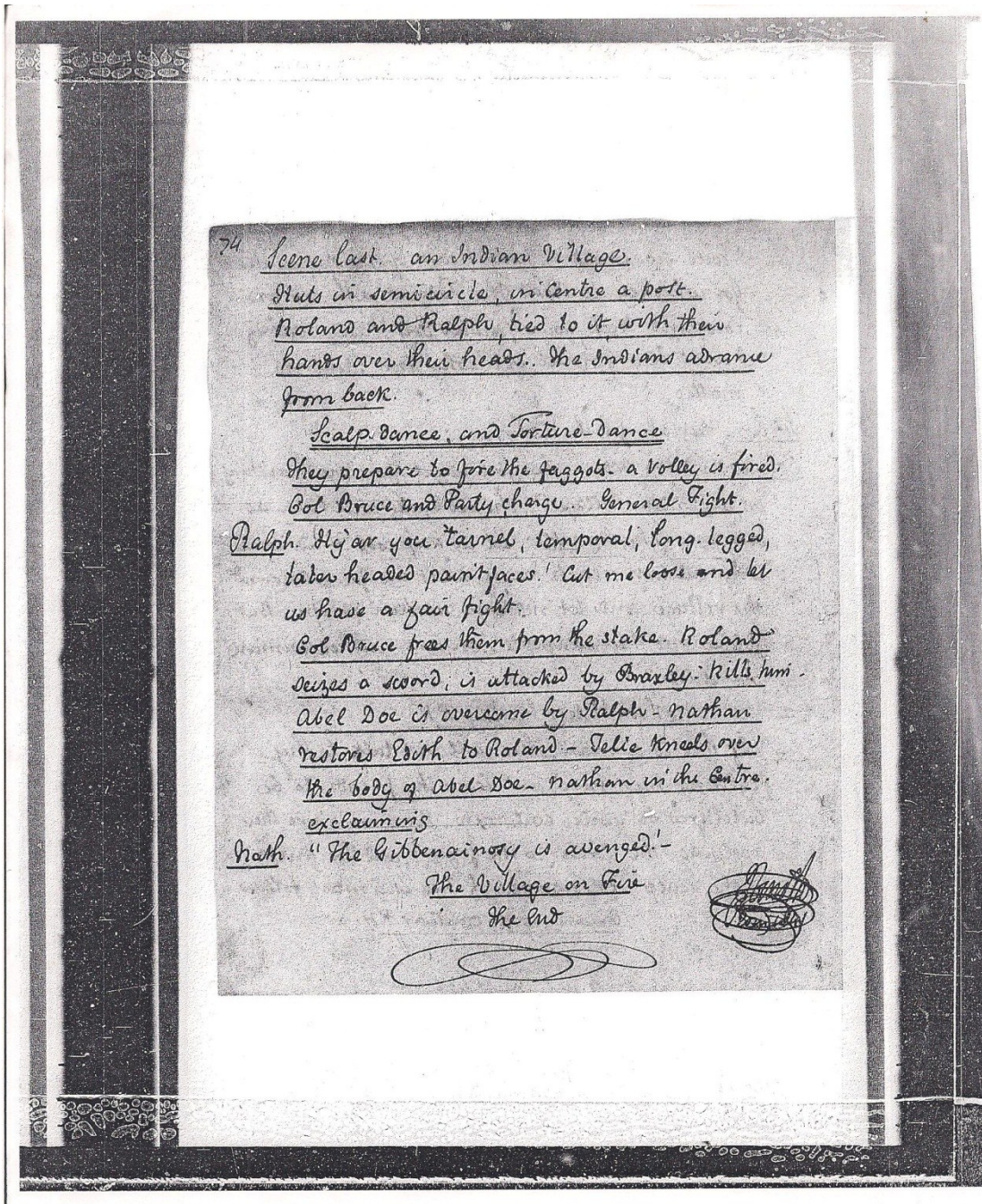


Actor's Part

The bottom passage reads "Property of Jo. Proctor, Esq."

Part for Leslie in *Oliver Cromwell*. Nineteenth Century Playbooks Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Appendix G

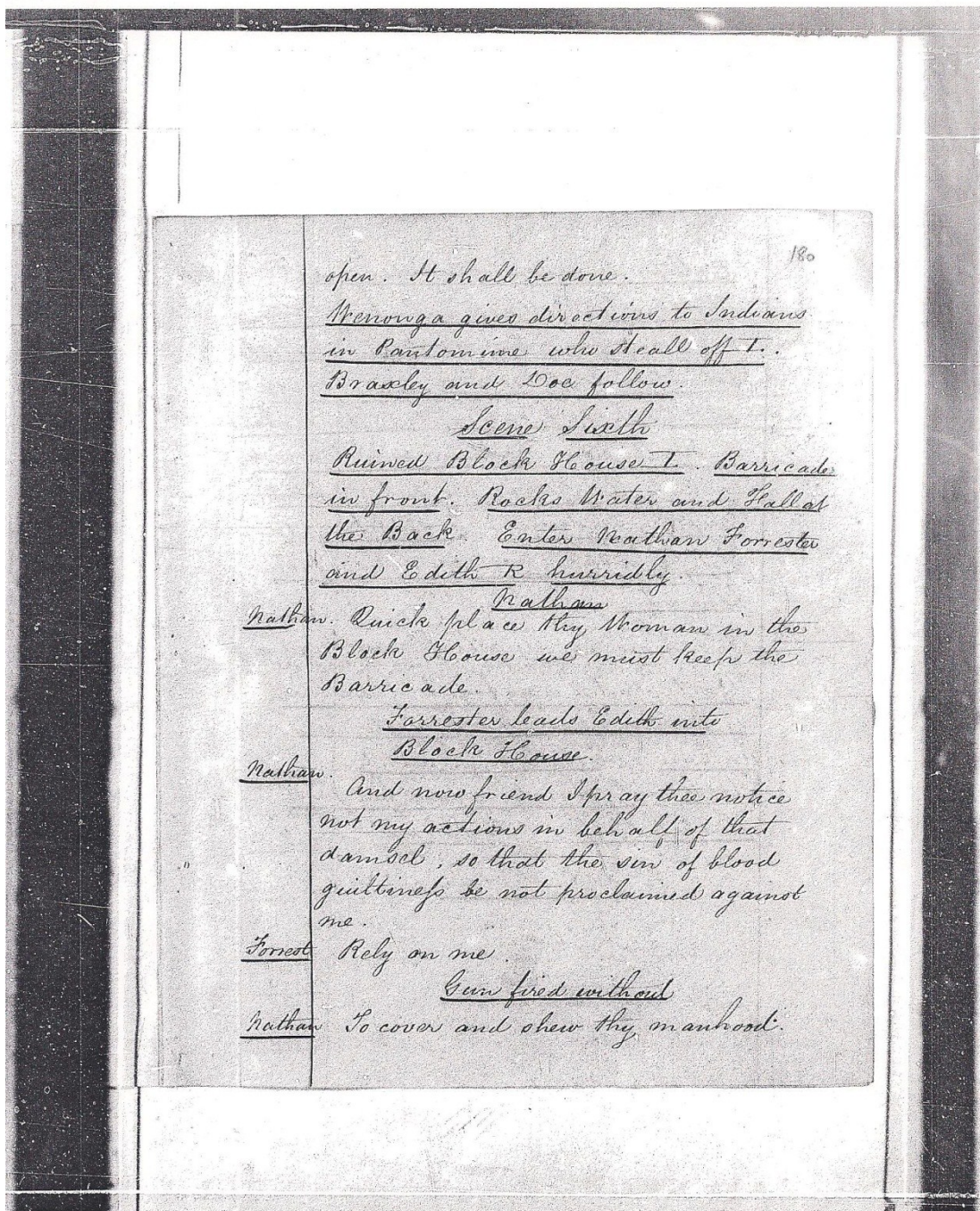


74 Scene last. an Indian Village.
Plats in semicircle, in Centre a post.
Roland and Ralph tied to it with their
hands over their heads. The Indians advance
from back.
Scalp Dance, and Torture-Dance
They prepare to fire the faggots. a Volley is fired.
Col Bruce and Party charge. General Fight.
Ralph. H'ear you t'arnel, temporal, long legged,
l'ater headed paint faces. Cut me loose and let
us have a fair fight.
Col Bruce frees them from the stake. Roland
seizes a sword, is attacked by Braxley. Kills him.
Abel Doe is overcome by Ralph. Nathan
restores Esith to Roland - Jelic kneels over
the body of Abel Doe. Nathan in the Centre.
exclaiming
Nath. "The Gibbenainogy is avenged!"
The Village on Fire
The End

1840 Nick

Nick of the Woods; or, Kentucky in 1782; A Drama in Three Acts from Dr Bird's Popular Novel. Act 3, scene 4, final page. Lord Chamberlain's Plays, British Library. Add. MS 42956 #13, June-September 1840. Microform reprint from *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, ca. 1975.

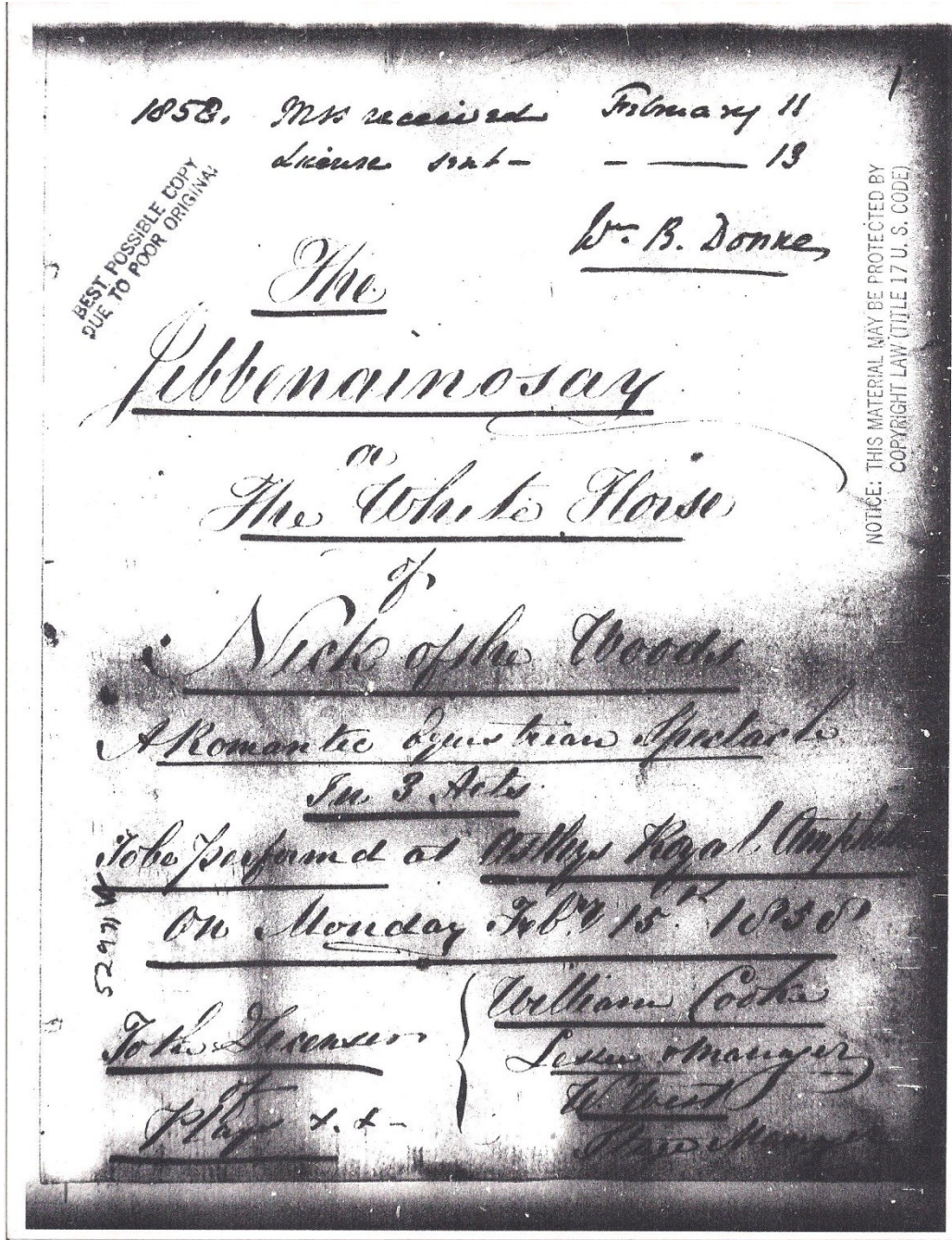
Appendix H



1844 "Pritchard" Nick

Nick of the Woods. Act 1, scene 6. Lord Chamberlain's Plays, British Library. October-November 1844. Add. MS 42979 #7. Microform reprint from *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, ca. 1975.

Appendix I



1858 (Equestrian) Nick

Title page and license request

Jibbenainosay; or, The White Horse of Nick of the Woods. Lord Chamberlain's Plays, British Library. Add. MS 52971.4x #W. January-February 1858. Microform reprint in *Nineteenth Century English and American Drama*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, ca. 1975.



Nick of the Woods.

BRAXLEY Heaven hath given you to my power. How can I
refuse to help you—
NATHAN (*Springing on him*) Thou liest!

Act 2. Scene 3.

London, Published by Duncombe, 10, Middle Row, Holborn.

Duncombe's Edition.

NICK OF THE WOODS:

OR,

THE ALTAR OF REVENGE!

A MELO DRAMA,

IN

Two Acts.

By J. T. HAINES, Esq.

*Author of The Idiot Witness, The Wraith of the Lake, Rattlin the
Reef, Jacob Faithful, Breakers Ahead, Maidens Beware,
The Charming Folly, &c. &c.*

THE ONLY EDITION CORRECTLY MARKED, BY PERMISSION,
FROM THE PROMPTER'S BOOK.

To which is added,

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS
THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS,
SITUATIONS—ENTRANCES—EXITS—PROPERTIES, AND
DIRECTIONS.

AS PERFORMED AT THE
LONDON THEATRES.

EMBELLISHED WITH A FINE ENGRAVING
By Mr. Findlay, from a Drawing taken expressly in the Theatre.

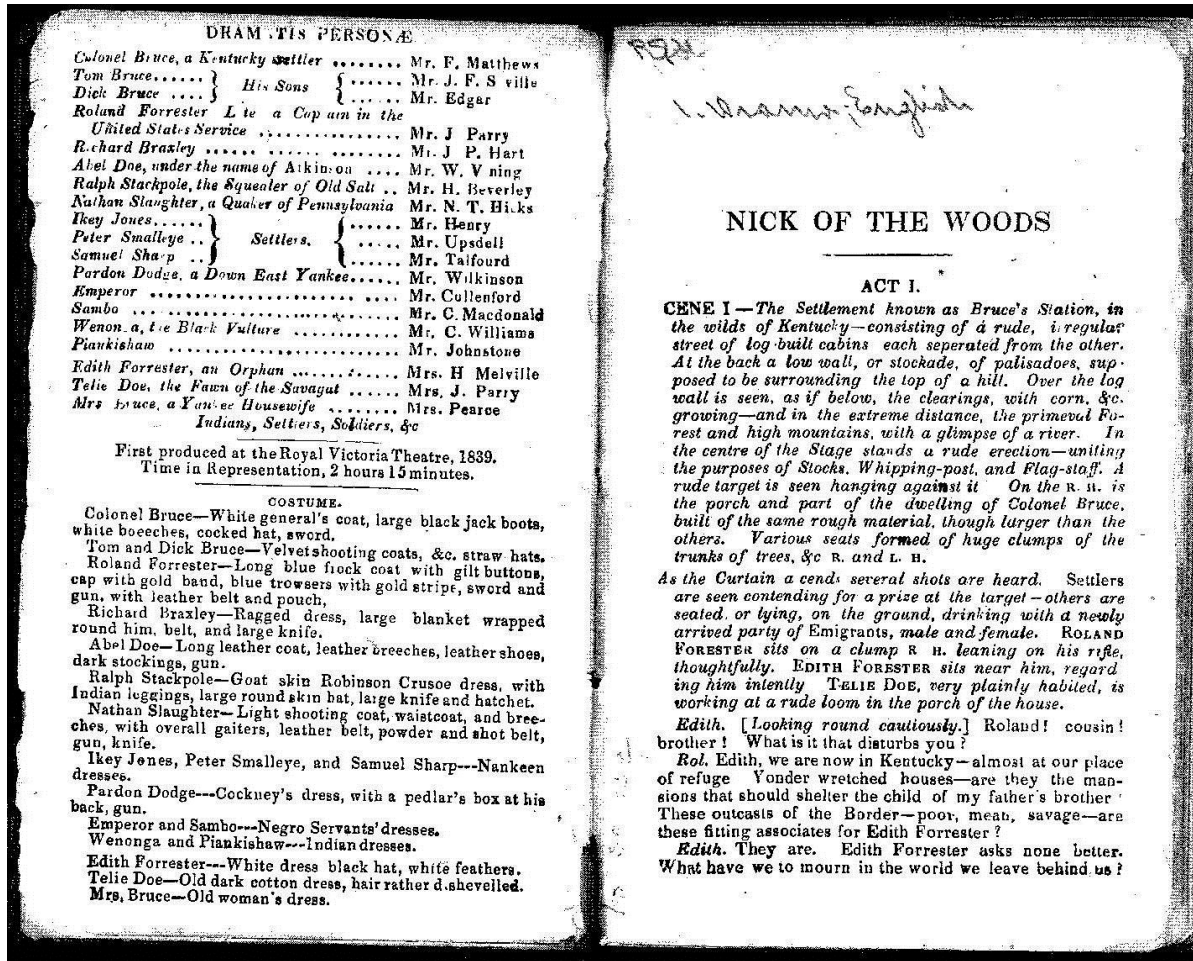
LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN DUNCOMBE,
10, MIDDLE ROW, HOLBORN.

Duncombe illustration and title page.

John Thomas Haines, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Altar of Revenge! A Melodrama in Two Acts.*
London: Duncombe, n.d., ca. 1838. Rare Books, British Library.

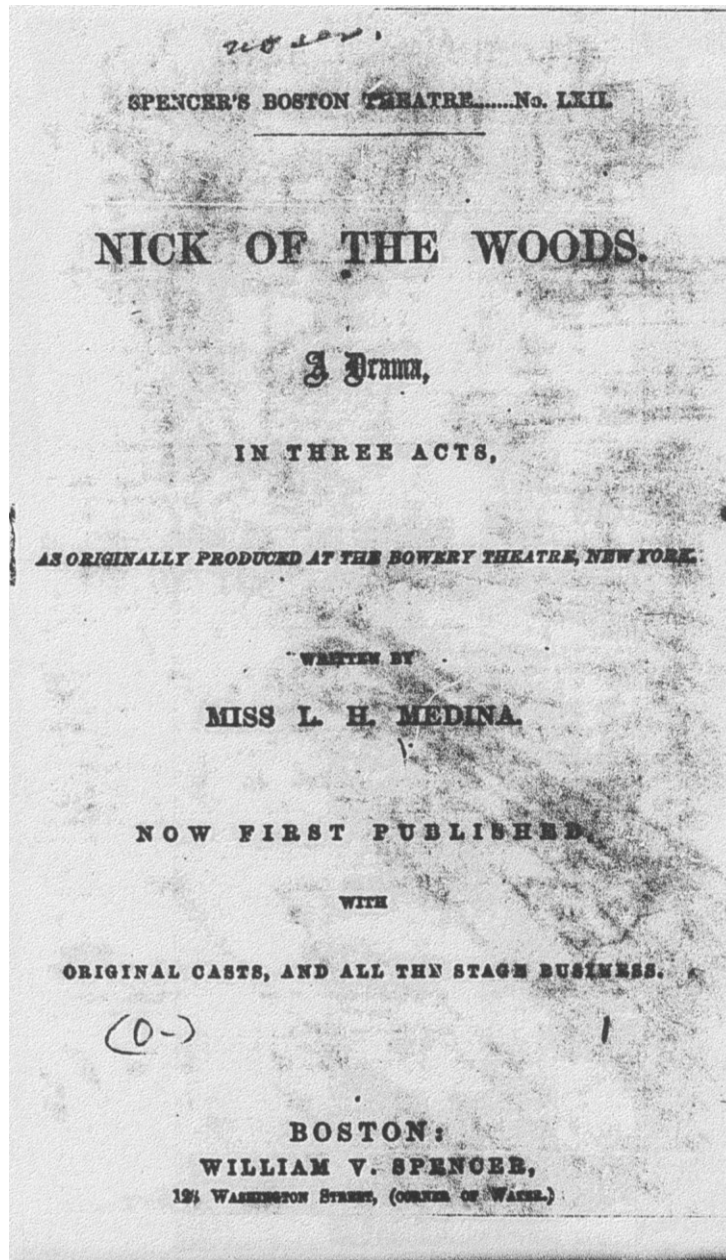
Appendix K



Lacy preliminaries and playscript.

John Thomas Haines, *Nick of the Woods; or, The Altar of Revenge! A Melodrama in Two Acts.* London: T. H. Lacy, n.d., ca. 1852-72. Bound in a volume of plays in the New York Public Library.

Appendix L



Spencer title page

Louisa H. Medina, *Nick of the Woods*. Title page. Boston: W. V. Spencer, n.d., ca. 1856-60. New York Public Library. Microform reprint from *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, n.d., ca. 1968-1990.

Appendix M

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

	<i>National, Boston, 1843.</i>	<i>National, Boston, 1846.</i>	<i>American, N. Orleans, 1849.</i>	<i>Forbes' Theatre, Prov- idence, 1855.</i>	<i>Purdy's National Thea- tre, N. Y., 1856.</i>
JIBBENAINOSAY,	Mr. Proctor	Mr. C. R. Thorne	Mr. J. Proctor	Mr. L. P. Roys	Mr. J. H. Allen
BLOODY NATHAN,	" Proctor	" C. R. Thorne	" J. Proctor	" L. P. Roys	" J. H. Allen
NICK OF THE WOODS,	" Proctor	" C. R. Thorne	" J. Proctor	" L. P. Roys	" J. H. Allen
AVENGER,	" Proctor	" C. R. Thorne	" J. Proctor	" L. P. Roys	" J. H. Allen
REGINALD ASHBURN,	" Proctor	" C. R. Thorne	" J. Proctor	" L. P. Roys	" J. H. Allen
SPIRIT OF THE WATERS,	" Proctor	" C. R. Thorne	" J. Proctor	" L. P. Roys	" J. H. Allen
RICHARD BRAXLEY,	" Cartlitch	" Cartlitch	" Gilbert	" E. C. Prior	" H. F. Stone
RALPH STACKPOLE,	" W. G. Jones	" G. G. Spear	" N. B. Clarke	" E. Varrey	" G. L. Fox
COL. TOM BRUCE,	" S. Johnston	" McCutcheon	" F. Williams	" H. O. Pardey	" C. W. Taylor
YOUNG TOM BRUCE,	" Forrester	" McFarland	" Herbert	" Strahan	" A. Cushman
LITTLE TOM BRUCE,	" McFarland	" T. Price	" Mack	" H. W. Finn	Master Murray
ABEL DOE,	Master J. Johnson	Master J. Johnson	Miss Buckley	Master William	Mr. G. Beane
ROLAND FORRESTER,	Mr. Linden	Mr. W. H. Curtis	Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Bishop	" D. Oakley
FIRST EMIGRANT,	" A. W. Fenno	" J. A. Smith	" Morton	" Bryant	" S. B. Wilkins
WENONGA, (Black Vulture,)	" Curtis	" Wells	" Toohey	" McClannin	" M. Pike
PIANESHAW,	" W. Taylor	" J. R. Paullin	" Naylor	" Fisher	" De Silveria
TIANESKA,	" J. Jones	" Keach	" McCloskey	" Bishop	" McAfee
NEHEMATAGLAH,	" T. Price	" Russell	" Herbert	" W. Mitchell
TELIE DOE,	" Marston	" Taylor
EDITH FORRESTER,	Mrs. Anderson	Mrs. Anderson	Miss Duff	Mrs. M. A. Tyrrell	Mrs. H. F. Nichols
PATIENCE,	" H. Cramer	Miss L. Gann	" Verety	" Bryant	Miss A. Cushman
MRS. BRUCE,	" J. H. Ring	Mrs. J. H. Ring	" Law
PHOEBE BRUCE,	" Woodward	" Woodward	Mrs. Worrell	" Attwood	Mrs. Wray
NELLY BRUCE,	" Mlot	" S. D. Johnson	Miss Bradley	Miss Isabella Andrews	Miss Hampton
	Miss Parker	Miss Parker	Mrs. McCloskey	" Munroe	" Wright

Originally produced at the Bowery Theatre, New York.

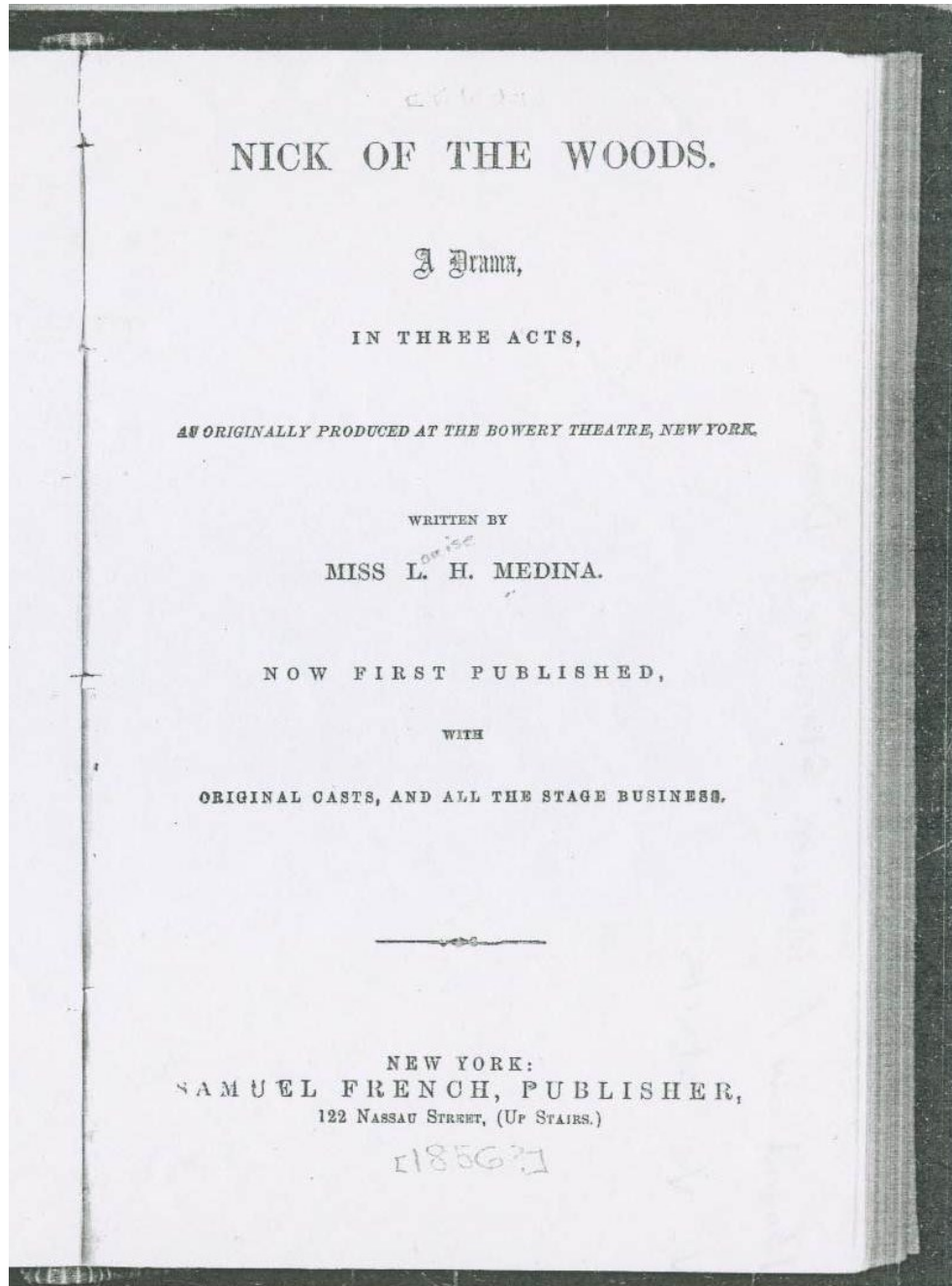
THE JIBBENAINOSAY,.....Mr. Proctor. RALPH STACKPOLE,.....Mr. W. F. Gates. TELIE DOE,.....Mrs. Shaw.

Spencer Cast/Production table

The footer lists three roles for the alleged New York premiere.

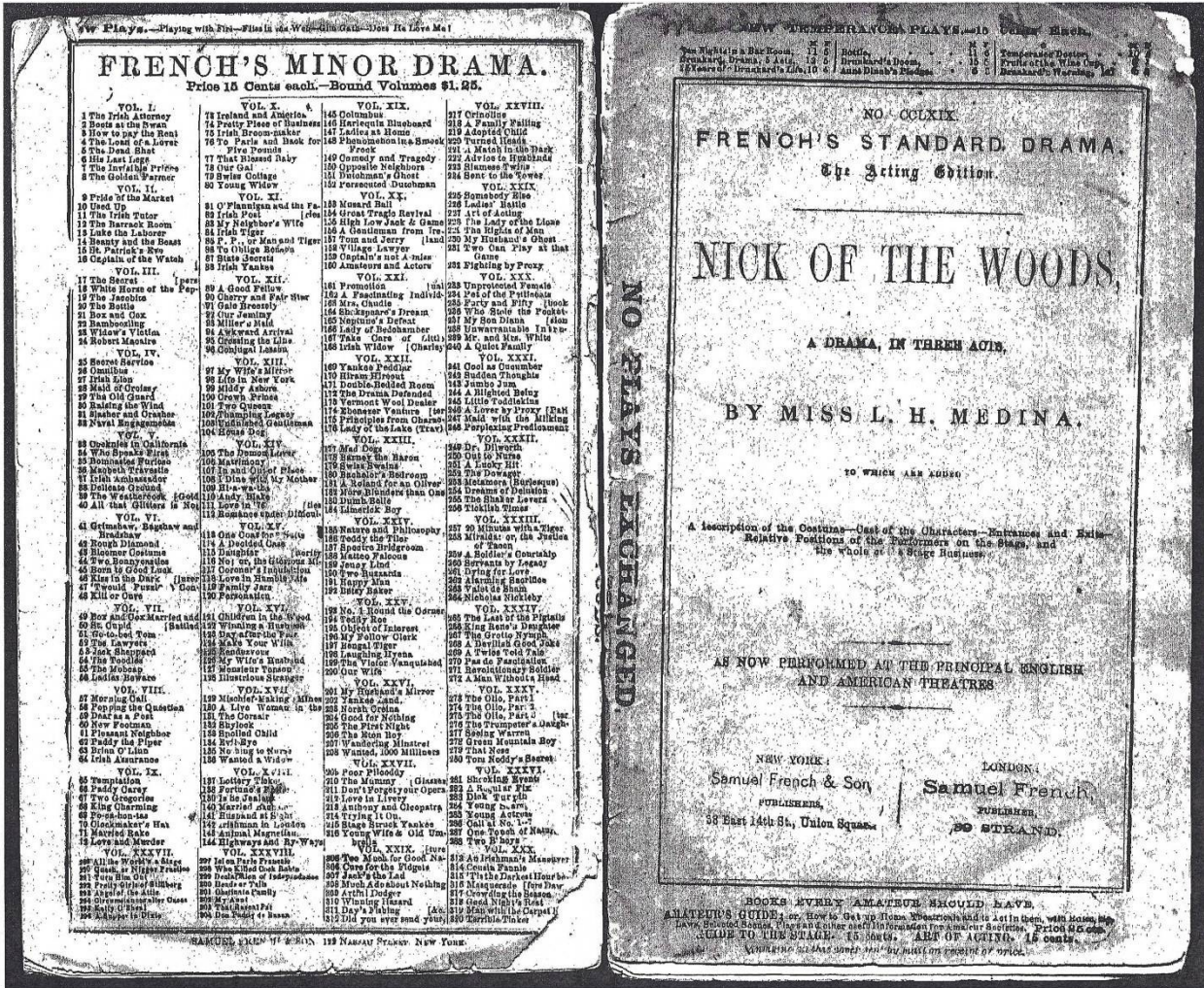
Louisa H. Medina. *Nick of the Woods*. Boston: W. V. Spencer, n.d., ca. 1856-60. New York Public Library. Microform reprint from *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, n.d., ca. 1968-1990.

Appendix N



Samuel French title page

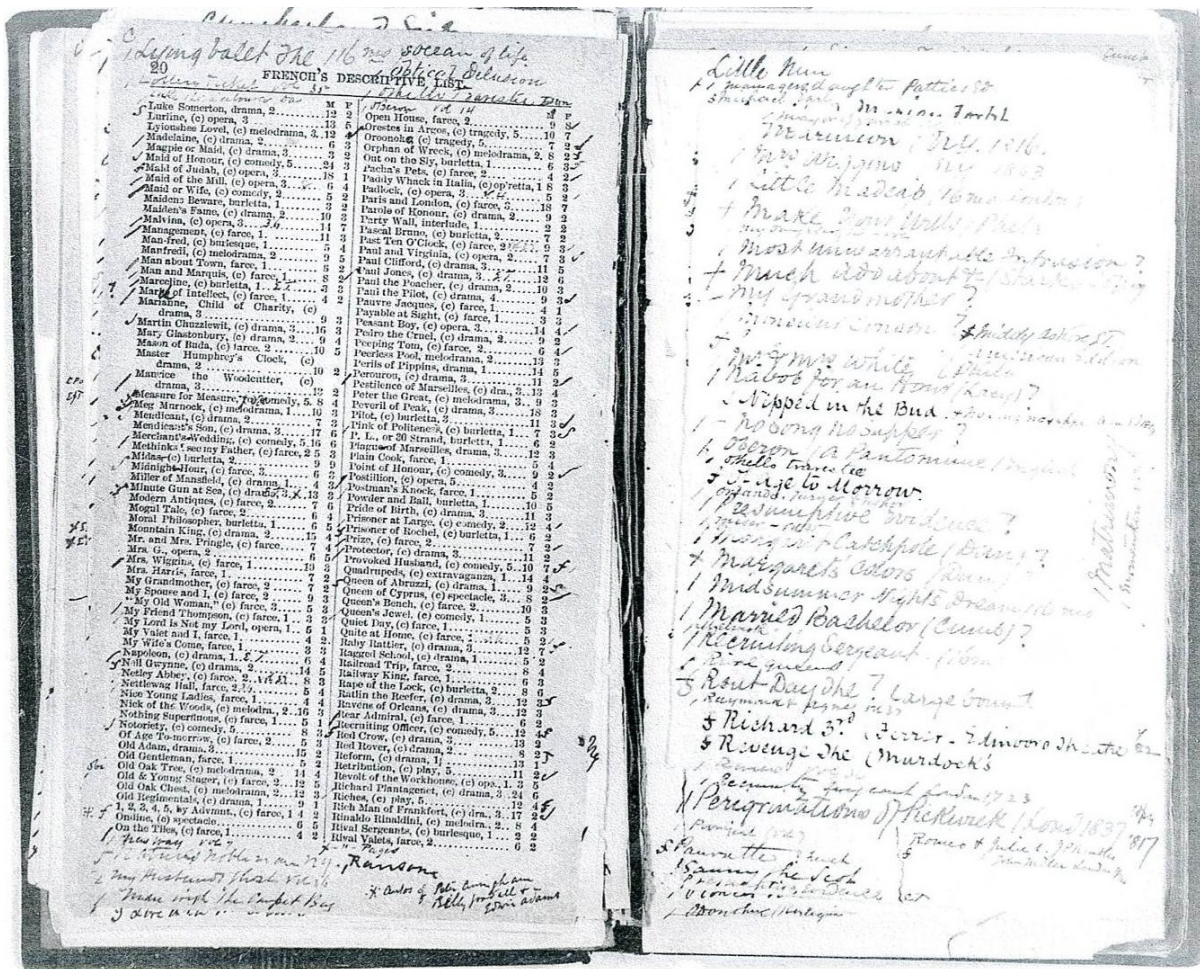
Louisa H. Medina, *Nick of the Woods*. New York: Samuel French, n.d., ca. 1860-1872. Volume 34-35 of Samuel French *Modern Standard Drama* series. University of Virginia Library (circulating stacks).



Samuel French front/back cover

Mid-page passage right reads "A description of the Costume...." Top right advertises temperance plays; the bottom right, an amateur guide. Catalogue footer bears an older address.

Louisa H. Medina, *Nick of the Woods*. New York: Samuel French & Son; London: Samuel French. ca. 1878-81. Nineteenth Century Playbooks Collection. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

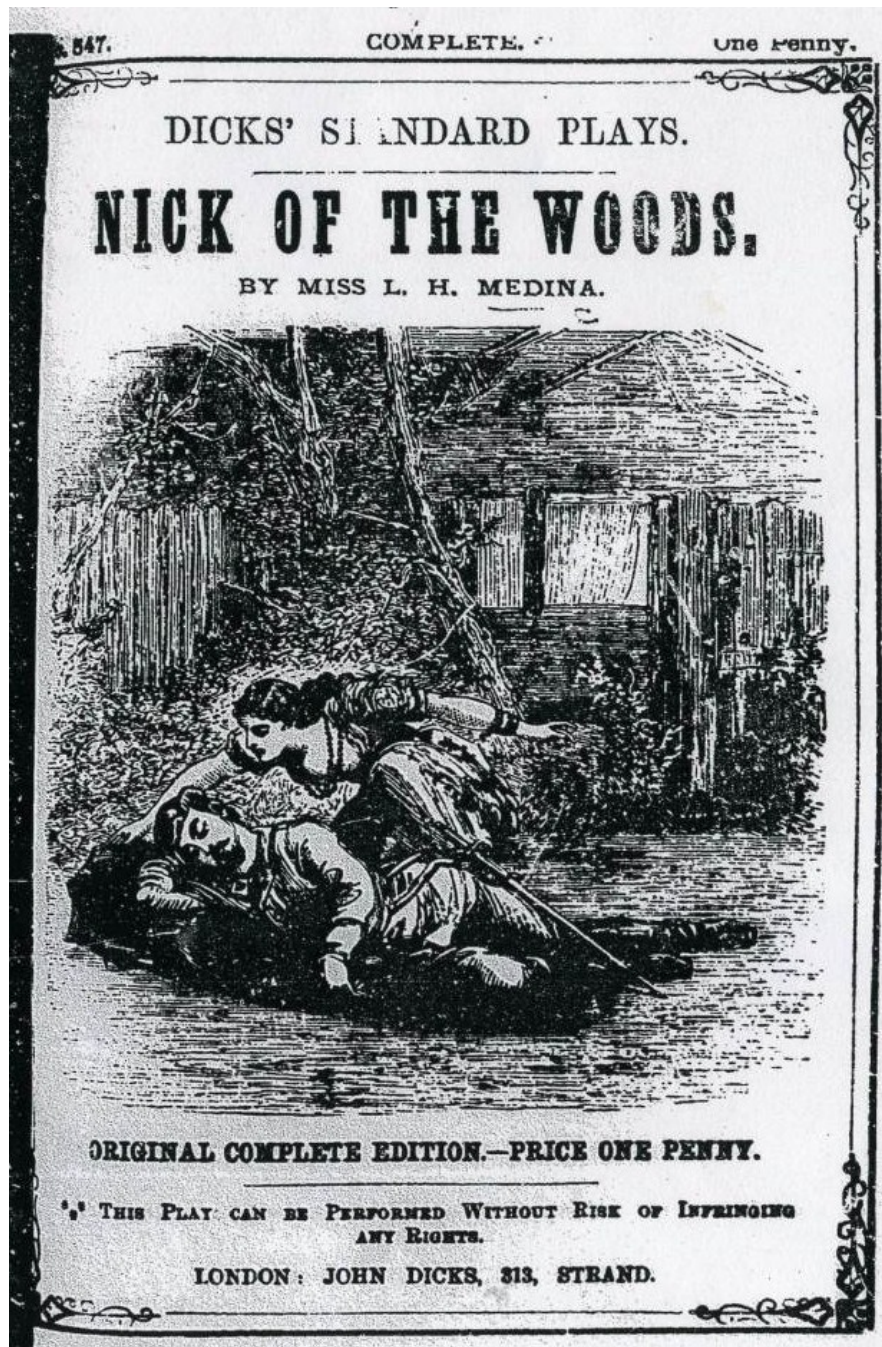


Becks' Samuel French Play catalogue

Nick of the Woods, listed on the lower left column, is not checked.

George Becks and Samuel French, *French's Descriptive Catalogue*. New York: Samuel French, n.d. Interleaved with MS. notes. Becks Bequest. New York Public Library. Microform reprint from *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, ca. 1965-1900.

Appendix Q



Medina *Nicks*, Dicks cover

The picture shows Telie warning Roland.

Louisa H. Medina, *Nick of the Woods*. London: Dicks, n.d., ca. 1880s. Rare Books, British Library. Microform reprint in *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, ca. 1975.

Appendix S

-4-

BRAXLEY: Hist! (left) Hist! (center) Hist! (right)
Hist! Oh! Abel Doe, you renegade knave! You startled
me. But enough of this. Let us about the business.
Hist! Hist! Ah-ha-ha-ha! The fools sleep. Little
do they know that Mountain Jim Braxley is afoot.

ABEE: Or that the renegade, Abel Doe, abets him.

BRAXLEY: Silence, fool! And now to reconnoiter the
station. Call Chief Wattapottamie to assist us in our
fell design. ... Come, henchmen, let us skulk and
slink. I, as befitting my superiority and race, will
skulk. And you, Abel Doe and Chief Wattapottamie, will
slink ...

CHIEF: Ugh!

ABEL: Aw, Braxley, why cain't I skulk! I may be a
renegade, but I am a white man, and I want to skulk with
you ...

BRAXLEY: Silence, Base Knave. You have lost the name
of white man. You must skink -- slink with your savage
brothers ... skink, I say ... skink! (Song)

ABEL: Geez, I'm sorry boss ... so I'll slink. (Jewish)

BRAXLEY: No more complaints, fool. And now to reconnoi-
ter. (Reconnoitering their way to Roland..) At last!
At last! At last! Roland Dunrovin lies in my power.
No longer will this noble fool menace my menacing. No
longer will he come between me and the beautiful Isadora
Byrd. No longer will he prevent me the fortune which
I have stolen from the luscious Isadora. Ah, ha, ha,
ha, power is mine! Power is mine! I gloat! I gloat!
I gloat! (to henchmen) And how think you henchmen he
should be dispatched. Who should have the pleasure of
sending Roland Dunrovin to meet his maker?

ABEL: Let me, Braxley, let me! I ain't had no fun since
we burned out the widdier woman down in Lyons.
(CHIEF objects in pantomime)
No, no, no, he always has ~~xxx~~ more fun than me.

BRAXLEY: I am nothing if not an amiable man. The wel-
fare of my friends is dear to my heart. We'll draw straws.

(They draw chest hairs.)

BRAXLEY: Quickly, quickly, we must wring our bird's
neck before time flies further. The Indians say that
the ouzel bird is loose upon the country again. Moun-
tain Jim Braxley fears nor man nor devil, yet dread
clutches even his evil heart when the name of the spirit-
that-walks is spoken. So quickly, quickly, friend Abel.

Dark Horse Theatre *Nick* playscript

Jerry Carlson, Greig Steiner, and Dark Horse Theatre. *The Tender Tale of Telie Doe; or, The Indian Maiden's Revenge*. TS. Greig Steiner personal papers, Estes, Colorado.

Appendix T



Readex opaque of Medina, *Nick*, Dicks edition

The header identifies the English sub-section of the Nineteenth Century Plays series, Medina, Dicks, and 15 pages. The footer carries the Readex imprint and “Courtesy of British Library.”

Louisa H. Medina, *Nick of the Woods*. London: Dicks, n.d., ca. 1880s. Micro-opaque. In *Nineteenth Century English and American Plays*. New Canaan, CT: Readex, 1975. New York University Library.

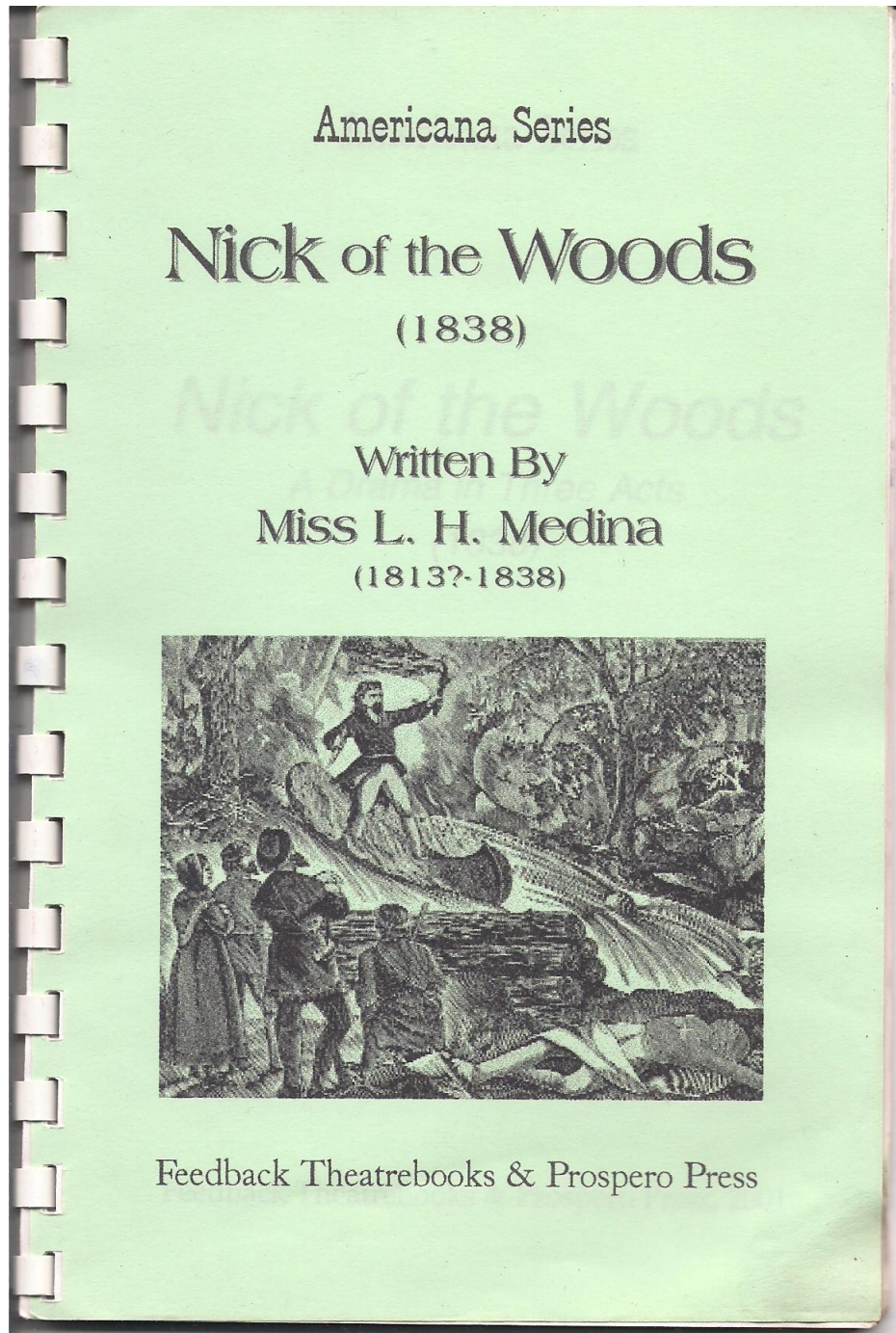
Appendix U



Readex microform cartons on library shelves

Nineteenth Century English and American Plays micro-opaque set in cloth-covered board cartons. New Canaan, CT: Readex, ca. 1968-1980s. New York University Library.

Appendix V



Medina, *Nick*, 2001 edition

Louisa H. Medina, *Nick of the Woods*. Reprint. Edited by Walter Meserve. Brooklin, ME: Feedback Theatrebooks & Prospero Press, 2001.

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