performance of John Fletcher's *The Humorous Lieutenant* at the 'New Theatre in Drv[ry L]ane', was derived from John Downes's *Roscius Anglicanus*, as revealed by its replication of the prompter's errors in attempting to recall the event forty-five years after its occurrence. In a *Bookman* article entitled 'A Spurious Old Playbill', published in 1920—exactly one hundred years after Collier's hoax was 'first given to the world'—W. J. Lawrence set the record straight:

> the *s* in 'Thursday' should have been old-faced
> ...
> the bill, if genuine, would have finished off with the then customary '*Vivat Rex*'
> ...
> April 8th, 1663, fell on a Wednesday, not a Thursday
> ...
> The date of the opening [was] ... May 7th ... [not] April 8th
> ...
> Clun had formerly acted the title character ... [but] Lacy was now substituted in it.

Lawrence defeated Collier's hopes of literally making history on this occasion, and may have felt it unnecessary to add that the inclusion of the year within the date appeared more than one hundred years prematurely (fig. 144).[104]

Another imaginative artefact which, like Collier's, has been mistaken as genuine on a number of occasions, was transcribed in 1833 by the *Times*, offering its readers a 'copy of an old Irish play-bill, issued in the year 1793':

> 'Hamlet!' originally written and composed by the celebrated Dan Hayes, of Limerick, and inserted in Mr. Shakspere's works. Hamlet by Mr. Kearns (being his first appearance in that character), who, between the acts, will perform several soloes on the patent bag-pipes, which play two tunes at the same time. Ophelia by Mrs. Prior, who will introduce several favourite airs in character, particularly 'The Lass of Richmond Hill', and 'We'll all be unhappy together', from the Reverend Mr. Dibdin's Oddities. The parts of the King and Queen, by the direction of the Reverend Father O'Callaghan, will be omitted, as too immoral for any stage ... The value of the tickets, as usual, will be taken, if required, in candles, bacon, soap, butter, cheese, &c., as Mr. Kearns wishes, in every particular, to accommodate the public. N.B.

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[104] *The Humourous Lieutenant*, by John Fletcher, playbill [forgery], New Theatre in Drury Lane, 8 April 1663, rpt. in Lawrence, 'Spurious', p. 15. Lawrence's demolition commences on p. 16.

> No person whatsoever will be admitted into the boxes without shoes or stockings.[105]

On other occasions the popularity of a genuine playbill has created a demand far exceeding the original supply, and the document has essentially been re-issued, sometimes decades after the commemorated event. David Garrick frequently remains the subject of these second editions: in the nineteenth century a 'reprint, not intended as an imitation', of the bill announcing his first appearance at Goodman's Fields was produced, yet in 1900 Percy Fitzgerald declared that 'even this is not to be procured now'.[106] And in the later-twentieth century reproductions of British playbills published in the 1800s are readily available at London's Theatre Museum, satisfying the same nostalgic impulses which for centuries have led playgoers to preserve their dramatic documents as a means of revisiting, even briefly, the various performances in their past.

Many theatregoers have treated even their most ordinary playbills and programmes as souvenirs, finding them profoundly evocative mementoes of performances attended in the past. In 1823 Charles Lamb began his essay 'On Some of the Old Actors' with an account of just such a discovery:

> The casual sight of an old Play Bill, which I picked up the other day … tempts me to call to mind a few of the Players, who make the principal figure in it … There is something very touching in these old remembrances. They make us think how we *once* used to read a Play Bill—not, as now peradventure, singling out a favourite performer, and casting a negligent eye over the rest; but spelling out every name … 'Orsino, by Mr. Barrymore'—What a full Shakespearian sound it carries! how fresh to memory arise the image, and the manner, of the gentle actor![107]

Six decades later Walter Gordon reported an almost transcendental experience under similar circumstances:

> Great names … stared me in the face, until those heroes of the past seemed to flit before me, like the ghosts as they passed before Macbeth in the pit of Acheron.

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[105] 'Curious Irish Play-Bill', *Times* 11 January 1833, p. 1.
[106] Fitzgerald, 'Growth', p. 533.
[107] Charles Lamb, 'On Some of the Old Actors', *Elia*, pp. 302–322.

But for Gordon the document itself was ultimately superseded by the recollection it inspired:

> Let me fold up my bill and put it carefully away; the white satin has mellowed to a creamy hue, the gold fringe is tarnished, the memory of that pleasant time alone seems fresh and bright.[108]

In the late 1880s, Percy Fitzgerald's sensuous tribute to the reanimating power of the playbill constituted an appropriately evocative text unto itself:

> The old rustling crumpled bill—of thinnest paper—glistening in its rich ebony type, still seems to give forth the scent of the orange peel and the curious flavour of the lobbies; the lamps are lit once more, the music plays, and … we hear the inimitable, indescribable Buckstonian cackle at the wing.[109]

In the final decade of the nineteenth century N. L. Parker's encounter with a collection of bills resulted in an 'indescribable attraction not unmixed with pathos':

> In looking through it half-buried memories are awakened, former associations revived, yet the pleasure becomes pain at the recollection of how many of the actors have passed to that bourne whence no traveller returns.[110]

And Francis Edwards acknowledged that to 'look at the bill of that famous first night, is to conjure up again all the old familiar faces'.[111] But perhaps W. J. Lawrence has offered the most suitable image with which to associate the playbill's contribution to the romance of the theatre—romance:

> What a storage of happy memories lies hidden in a bundle of these frayed and rumpled sheets! … About a time-worn, personally treasured bill hangs some of that melancholy sweetness and softened retrospect conjured up by a faded love-letter.[112]

Long after the additional material documents with which bills of the play often interact beyond the final curtain have been forgotten, it is the theatregoer's memory of the intangible performance text which remains happily preserved in such souvenirs.

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[108] Gordon, pp. 143, 145.
[109] Fitzgerald, 'Origin', p. 374.
[110] N. L. Parker, p. 13.
[111] Francis Edwards, p. 17.
[112] Lawrence, 'Old Playbills', p. 220.

This chapter has been concerned with the variety of means by which playbills and programmes have continued to serve both their productions and their readers following the conclusion of an evening's entertainment. The mediation between a performance text from the past and a reader's subsequent reflection upon it identifies just one of many complementary *pairs* distinguishing the bill's retrospective function from its previous roles in anticipation of the future and in conjunction with the present. Approached as historical sources, for example, bills of the play can be studied either diachronically or synchronically. In both cases, such studies can yield information about the theatre, or about the society in which that theatre is located. In all of these situations such information can be interpreted objectively, valued for its factual content, or subjectively, appreciated for its connotative potential. And in every instance such interpretations can answer existing questions or raise new ones, beginning the reflective process afresh. These paired approaches seldom, if ever, amount to oppositions: their boundaries continually shift and the choices, if any, made between them may be unwitting or inevitable. Yet they surface again as qualities distinguishing the very manner in which collections of the documents themselves are organised—thematically or geographically, for example. And they are further manifested in the preoccupations characterising the numerous variations patterned after, or dependent upon, bills of the play, from narrative memoirs dominated by heated personal opinion to electronic databases filled with cold hard facts. The most satisfactory results, however, often reflect a combination of approaches. In the complete absence of any claim to accuracy, a purely anecdotal theatre history can rapidly descend into the 'turgid picturesqueness' shunned by W. J. Lawrence, while a mere chronicle, utterly devoid of an even remotely personal voice, offers little stimulation to its readers. But a well-balanced hybrid draws on the strengths of all options from every category. Within a scholarly environment this might assume the form of an annotated calendar, such as *The London Stage*, thoroughly documenting a well-defined temporal period with both diachronic and synchronic analyses of both theatre history and social history. The relatively banal daily listings supply the work

with vitally objective raw material informing the engaging narratives found in the lengthy introductions to all five parts. Meanwhile, for the theatregoer reflecting on performances of the past, bill in hand, this procedural amalgam may amount to little more than retaining an open mind and drawing on all available experience.

In a sense the entirety of the present work has represented a reflection on the past, as most of the discussion has concerned the 350-year period terminating in 1914. And, with playbills long defunct at the dawn of the third millennium, concerns with their function in anticipation of the future likewise remain purely historical. It is therefore on the contemporary theatre programme's role in conjunction with the present that additional work would perhaps now be most welcome. Before a performance commences there is time in which to prepare. After a performance concludes there is time in which to reflect. During a performance, however, the pace of the action often precludes even a moment's contemplation. If all the world's a stage, one sometimes wonders whether a programme might not be obtained before the final curtain. But, according to Francis Bacon, 'in this theatre of … life it is reserved only for God and angels to be lookers on'.[113] The ostensible omniscience of this alleged auditory presumably precludes the necessity, and hence the availability, of so desirably definitive a document.

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[113] Francis Bacon, *Of the Advancement of Learning*, 1605, ed. G. W. Kitchin (London: Dent, [1915]), 2: 157.

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