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Michael John Goodman

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Sally-Beth MacLean call it “a superb reference tool for off-site consultation.”¹³ I agree. My hope is that the site eventually becomes recognized not as a digital archive for secondary “reference” but as a superb *primary source* tool for developing new research ideas.

KARA J. NORTHWAY

Kansas State University

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**Rusche, Harry, and Justin Shaw, project dirs.
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Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 2016. Accessed 15 December 2019.
shakespeare.emory.edu.

Shakespeare and the Players is a digital archive containing around a thousand postcards of Shakespearean actors from the 1880s to 1914. It provides a unique and fascinating insight into late Victorian and Edwardian theatre that will be of significant interest to those researching and teaching not just early modern drama but also theatrical history and its intersection with visual and material cultures. Originally launched in the 1990s by Harry Rusche, whose collection of postcards form the collection, Shakespeare and the Players has recently undergone an attractive new redesign led by Emory University PhD student and digital project manager Justin Shaw. Coding and layout have been provided by digital scholarship consultant Erin Hecht, and assistance on the project has been contributed by another Emory PhD candidate, Kayla Shipp Kamibayashi. As well as the appealing redesign, the site also now includes audio and video material of some of the actors who feature in the collection, expanding the archive’s scope and potential research and teaching applications. Indeed, these applications from a pedagogical perspective are large, especially as the archive has been designed with mobile phones and tablets in mind, meaning in-class activities are easily accessible to students and can be developed confidently by educators.

13. Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean, *Lord Strange’s Men and Their Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 340, doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300191998.001.0001.

When a user visits the archive, they are presented with a clean and elegant design, which befits the visual nature of the resource's material. On the home page there are eight square boxes, each featuring an image from one of the postcards. Rolling the mouse over the boxes indicates that by clicking on them the user will be directed to introductory essays and material about the postcards, the creation of the archive, teaching resources, and the history of the project. All this information is interesting and useful, allowing users to understand the scope and history of the resource. There is a slight dissonance, however, when the boxes—the main focal point of the home page—do not take the user into exploring the postcards proper but offer these essays instead. This is, ultimately, a very minor quibble and very much down to personal taste, but more foregrounding of the postcards would have been good to see and would have enabled new users to quickly understand the resource and to better locate themselves within it.

That said, the home page is very stylish and the information that the boxes link to is valuable and worthwhile. At the top of the home page are links to “About,” “Resources,” and “Contact Us” pages, along with The Postcard section which contains an excellent essay by Harry Rusche, “Shakespeare’s Players on Postcards,” that places the postcards in their historical and cultural context and their significance for Shakespeare studies.¹ Rusche conservatively estimates that even if just 0.0001 percent of the 734,500,000 postcards sold in Great Britain during 1906 had some connection to Shakespeare, then that is still 73,450 postcards—an astonishing amount of visual Shakespeare material being disseminated in this period. By offering users a rich cross-section of this material, then, Shakespeare and the Players celebrates a forgotten (yet important) part of Shakespeare history.

There are two ways of navigating the material contained in the resource: through links either to “The Players” or to “The Plays.” Clicking on “The Players” link brings up an alphabetical list of all the actors who feature in the postcards—from Janet Achurch to James Young. Usefully, these links also provide users with a brief biography of the actor, their theatrical achievements, and the postcards that they feature in. On the “Dame Ellen Terry” page, for example, we learn about her most significant stage roles and her wider family. Indeed, users are encouraged to explore these connections further through extensive

1. Harry Rusche, “Shakespeare’s Players on Postcards,” shakespeare.emory.edu/preface/.

hyperlinks embedded in the actors' biographies. On Ellen Terry's page, a user might click on "Fred Terry" to learn more about her youngest brother. These biographies function as a rich encyclopaedia of who's who in the Shakespeare world in this period and allow users to engage deeply with the resource. Indeed, it is very easy to envision exciting undergraduate projects developing from this aspect of the website alone.

Beneath these entries are the postcards themselves. Ellen Terry, for instance, features on five of them, where she is depicted in various Shakespeare roles, including Lady Macbeth and Beatrice. The latter postcard shows Terry in tableau, wearing a beautiful patterned dress and jewellery. The image is startling because, although it is in black and white, there is a freshness and a sharpness to it, revealing something of Terry's personality as well as the material aspects of that production. Furthermore, it is just possible to make out in the background the drawing of a castle, which would have provided the backdrop to various scenes. The image is fascinating from a research perspective because it provides us with a wealth of visual information about this production and Terry's approach to the role, while its beguiling quality also helps to explain the attraction these postcards would have had for people in the first place.

Compellingly, the resource also allows users to view the back of the postcards, offering insights into people's lives and the provenance of the postcards. The back of the postcard depicting Ellen Terry in the role of Queen Katherine from *Henry VIII* contains the hurried message, "on arriving home today I found your letter and am writing tomorrow afternoon. Sorry this has gone [unreadable] will explain." Obviously, this is quite an interesting domestic drama that we will never have the answers to, but what makes it fascinating is the link to Shakespeare: why did the sender use this particular postcard of Ellen Terry? Was it the first postcard the writer picked up from a pile, or is there more to it than that? By reading some of the details on the back of the postcard we learn that it is the first in a new series given away to readers "of the new penny book F.M.N. Complete Novels." Can we infer that the sender is literary? While any conclusions must be speculative, the postcard offers the opportunity for educators to work with their students on a fun creative writing or research project: they could write an imaginative piece of writing explaining the events that led up to this postcard being sent and how they intersect with incidents in *Henry VIII* or they could begin by researching what the "F.M.N. Complete Novels" were.

In a similar way to exploring the collection through “The Players” link, users can also investigate the collection via a specific play (“The Plays”). By clicking on the link to *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, the user is taken to a page that features a brief synopsis of the play, below which are the thumbnail images of postcards (both front and back) from various productions, as well as helpful information about them. We learn, for instance, that the image of Ellen Terry in the role as Beatrice (as described above) is from Henry Irving’s production which opened at the Lyceum Theatre on 5 January 1891. While these details are far from comprehensive, they provide students with a strong starting point to develop further research into the theatre of this period.

Shakespeare and the Players, then, is an excellent digital resource that allows for new ways of engaging with and thinking about visual Shakespeare through the medium of postcards. There are no copyright restrictions on the images, and the project directors encourage researchers to use the collection for “private study, educational and scholarly purposes” (“Copyright”). They also welcome enquiries from users wishing to view the postcards physically. The resource has been developed using WordPress and is a terrific example of how this open source platform can enhance, support, and inspire scholarship. A slight downside to the resource is that it does not allow a user to zoom in on the postcards—which would be wonderful to do—so that specific details could be further examined or difficult writing deciphered more clearly and easily. WordPress allows this functionality, so the project directors must have their reasons for not enabling it. Regardless of this, however, Shakespeare and the Players contains an abundance of material that should excite educators, stimulate students, and enhance researchers’ understanding of the period.

MICHAEL JOHN GOODMAN

Cardiff University

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