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Holidaying with Late-Victorian Theatrical Celebrities: Rest, Wellbeing and Public Identity

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Abstract

‘In the Theatrical World our talk is all of holidays.’ So opened one of *Hearth and Home* magazine’s gossip columns in July 1897. The holidays taken by London’s late-Victorian West End theatre stars attracted regular press coverage and formed a regular subject of letters between actresses, actors and their friends. The narratives of hard work and public service that had played a significant role in improvements in the theatre industry’s reputational and cultural status prompted a secondary narrative around rest: a widely shared understanding that rest was necessary to counter the impacts of the ongoing on- and off-stage labour undertaken by stage stars. Together newspaper accounts and correspondence capture both industry-focused concerns about the maintenance of the strong physical and mental health required to sustain a theatrical career and social disquiet around the changing world of work more widely and patterns of overwork and exhaustion. In this essay I consider a range of press accounts and correspondence to consider how evidence of stage stars’ holidays can extend our understandings of the professional culture of the late-Victorian theatre industry and theatre’s contribution to wider social and political ideas surrounding work and rest, and physical and mental health.

Keywords

West End, theatre, celebrity, holiday, fashion, wellbeing, health

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'In the Theatrical World our talk is all of holidays.' So opened one of *Hearth and Home* magazine's gossip columns in July 1897.¹ The lives and loves of leading stage stars were standard content for *Hearth and Home*'s weekly feature and, in this issue, the summer holiday destinations chosen by theatrical celebrities were placed centre stage. Such press coverage was by no means unusual. Accounts of where popular theatrical personalities vacationed were commonplace in the final two decades of the nineteenth century. From ladies' magazines and penny newspapers to industry-based periodicals, more costly daily press and regional titles, details of the holidays taken by stage stars appeared in publications targeted at a wide range of readers. Reports of celebrity holiday locations – the hotels or rented cottages they selected, the people they holidayed with and the pastimes they chose – formed key elements of the imagery connected with theatre's 'A list' celebrity, off-stage world that was created and circulated by both the press and performers during the late nineteenth century.² In this article I examine how information about the holidaying practices of stage stars contained in press accounts, celebrity autobiographies and correspondence might extend understandings of the theatre industry's professional cultures. Such sources offer evidence of the impact of stage labour on performers' physical and mental wellbeing, and simultaneously reveal the contributions theatrical celebrities made to social and political debates around late-nineteenth-century public health reform and the changing world of work.

Theatrical Labour and the Need for Rest

Correspondence between stage performers and members of their professional and social networks regularly turned to the subject of the mental and physical demands of theatrical labour and an associated need for rest.³ The hard on- and off-stage work demanded by the day-to-day professional and public lives of leading actresses and actors is documented in personal and business letters, foregrounding the demanding combination of long production runs, rehearsal periods, public appearance schedules, press interviews, correspondence with fans and photographic shoots that were incurred by celebrity status. Acting was tiring. The running times of stage plays were long, much longer in general than we experience as audience members today. Costume changes were frequent and the costumes themselves often weighty and hot. Spectacular set elements had to be negotiated, unpleasant levels of gas and sulphur often emanated from stage and house lighting, and dance and song were regular features of many plays. Provincial tours necessitated peripatetic lifestyles (at least for some of the year), with travel and temporary accommodation adding further to the physical, mental and emotional demands working conditions placed on stage performers. The level of fatigue prompted by on- and off-stage theatrical work regularly surfaces in visceral detail in their letters and is a regular feature of press interviews with well-known actresses and actors. By the 1880s the accepted risk of a 'burn-out' culture – a level of exhaustion that was a threat to actresses' and actors' physical and mental health – is clearly indicated in these sources, and was acknowledged both in public and

in private. On occasions the severity of this burn-out required intervention. In an 1897 interview that recalled her early career, the actress Kate Rorke (1886–1945) discussed the ‘fear’ she had experienced during rehearsals for her first West End role at the age of seventeen. The anxiety ‘made her so ill’, the journalist recorded, ‘that, against her will, her father took her away for a holiday while the rehearsals were on’.⁴

Outside of theatre spaces, the profession’s leading figures sustained their careers and celebrity status through activity within wide social and cultural networks and engagement with their fans. Numerous letters seeking financial assistance, practical help or attendance at fashionable events arrived at leading actresses and actors’ home and work addresses. Some asked for professional introductions or opportunities; others detailed the heart-rending circumstances of families contending with poverty or serious illness and appealed for help. These requests were accompanied by a stream of approaches for contributions to the relentless cycle of charity occasions that characterised London’s social scene.⁵ Theatrical personalities faced acute, relentless logistical and emotional demands as a result of their careers and public identities, causing some performers to seek practical and administrative support from private assistants or secretaries to manage their off-stage public lives. A significant number of the industry’s leading figures balanced these routine, on-and off-stage professional requirements with the economic uncertainties and business operations of theatrical management. The actor Seymour Hicks (1871–1949) captured the challenges of this in *Twenty-Four Years of an Actor’s Life*, an autobiography that covers the first half of his stage career. ‘The London life of a hard-worked man is the continual spinning of a roulette wheel’, he explained. ‘It may be red – it may turn up black – but the labour and the method of the spinning is always the same, day in and day out.’⁶ Hicks was about to turn forty when these words were published. He was yet to enter the period of theatrical management for which he remains best known, but the labour of stage work was already familiar to him. His writing strips away the sheen of glamour associated with celebrity lives and discloses the physical and mental stresses incurred by theatrical fame. Pervasive stress was widely acknowledged to be a by-product of theatrical management. A summer 1898 edition of the *West End Review* noted that ‘scattered over the earth are the leaders of our stage. Making holiday it is supposed’, then firmly corrected the assumption that any of the industry’s key figures would experience any kind of rest during their annual break. The article concluded:

Who that has an inkling of the cares of the man behind the scenes would imagine that [...] there [is] an hour for any one of them that is not burdened with anxiety for the coming season.⁷

Further on in his autobiography, Hicks returns to the subject of exhaustion and its recognition as a side effect of a successful theatrical career when he confides in the

reader that ‘managing, writing and acting I find leave very little time for anything but a desire for rest’.⁸

Ongoing improvement in theatre’s status as a respectable cultural activity during the 1880s and 1890s developed in parallel with concerns about the physical and mental health of its leading representatives. To a certain extent the former was a cause of the latter. ‘Hard work’ narratives were a critical part of the industry’s improved social position. Images of stage performers’ relentless work and public service were grounded in their professional on-stage and management activities and in the high-profile public appearances and charitable activities they undertook, activities that increasingly saw performers operate within the same networks as leading society figures, aristocracy and – on occasions – royalty. When Hicks and the contributor to the *West End Review* discussed exhaustion and non-stop work, they were both reflecting an industrial reality and endorsing and cementing a dominant, circulating blueprint for a high-profile stage performer. Discussions of holidays in letters, the press and autobiographies repeatedly position stage performers’ need for rest at the intersection of narratives encompassing hard work, public service and work–life balance, all central tenets of public health reform. Through these narratives, theatrical celebrities were subsumed into wider understandings of public life as labour, the same set of understandings that moulded the public image of the royal family at the time. In 1890 the *Women’s Penny Paper* reported that ‘Princess Louise is ill in consequence of over-work and has been forbidden to undertake further public ceremonies for the present’.⁹ Instead she had been sent to the North Norfolk coast to recuperate (an area we will return to later in this article).

The style of holiday I cover in this article was only possible for affluent or well-established stage performers. Ellen Terry’s (1847–1928) memoirs record the early years of her career working with Ellen (1805–80) and Charles Kean (1811–68) and note that, while theatres were closed in July and August and that this was the period during which stage performers holidayed, ‘we were not in a position to afford such a luxury’.¹⁰ But for the small A-list, culturally and socially powerful sub-section of actresses and actors I cover here, holidays became almost compulsory during the 1880s and 1890s in response to the public identities and models of public service and hard work they represented. As ‘Resting’, by ‘An Old Stager’, published in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1898 asserted:

This is the period of the year when the actor casts off his stage-mantle [...] and settles down to that easy, indefinite, unemployed time which comes under the description of ‘Resting’. The rest is, to a great extent, compulsory.¹¹

In June 1888 the ‘Town and Country Gossip’ column in *Horse and Hound* magazine recorded ‘Ellen Terry, it is announced, requires rest’.¹² In June 1891 the celebrity actor manager Henry Irving (1838–1905) wrote to the singer Adelina Patti (1843–1919) apologising for being unable to make a social occasion at her new home in mid-Wales. The letter notes that he ‘only has four weeks free for

holiday this year, that he is very tired and must go away for rest and quiet'.¹³ The following year Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852–1917), then actor-manager at London's Haymarket Theatre, was reported as being at the then German spa town of Marienbad having a 'brain bath of rest and repose'.¹⁴

For theatre's stars holidaying was, at least in part, a public act. The need for the rest offered by holidays emphasised the hard work that characterised the image of leading stage performers and aligned them with high-profile society figures, including royalty. At the same time, actresses and actors' working patterns and high-profile holidays evoked current discourses and social and political disquiet around the impact of changing working cultures on lifestyle and wellbeing at the close of the nineteenth century, connecting theatre with other middle-class professions and positioning the industry's leading personnel within the sphere of Victorian public health reform as both subjects and models of developing ideas around work–life balance. Amy Milne-Smith notes that:

The problem of overwork was a familiar refrain of doctors, teachers and social commentators in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was an idea that pre-occupied many Victorians, who worried that the speed and requirements of modern professional expectations could lead to broken nerves, low spirits, or nervous collapse.¹⁵

Simultaneously, theatrical work presented a distinct set of problems. As Milne-Smith later asserts, most Victorian occupations relied primarily on either body or brain. Growing commuting and office cultures seeded sedentary lifestyles in unhealthy city air. The day-to-day labour and risks of manufacturing and farming took its toll on workers' bodies. In contrast, theatre performance depended on both body and brain. Maintaining a successful theatrical career in this professional context demanded both physical endurance and mental stamina. As the journalist Mrs Alec (Ethel) Tweedie (1862–1940) stated in her 1904 retrospective account of her theatrical friends and interviewees *Behind the Footlights*, 'the strain of theatrical life is great. No one should attempt to go upon the stage who is not strong. If there be any constitutional weakness, theatrical life will find it out', for 'a heavy part exhausts an actor in a few minutes as much as carrying a hod of bricks all day does a labourer'.¹⁶

Leading stage performers created and projected public identities that shaped and aligned with dominant narratives around hard work and rest. The significance of hard work to theatre's image can also be traced through the more ambiguous ways late-nineteenth-century stage personalities talked about rest and holidays. Echoing the Old Stager's description of near-compulsory rest, press commentaries reveal a pattern of references to performers having to take rest, against an innate inclination to resist. Finishing an 1887 spring tour in Birmingham marked the end of what the *Era* recorded as 'a term of twelve months hard labour' for Virginia Bateman (Compton, 1853–1940) and her husband Edward Compton (1854–1918). The well-known theatrical couple had completed a six-month residency at the

Strand Theatre, London, followed ‘without a night’s break’ by the Midlands tour. ‘The young actor-manager, who owns to being a “bit tired” will now seek repose at Cromer for a few weeks with his wife and family’ before recommencing the company’s touring schedule, the publication noted.¹⁷ The evident understatement represented by ‘a bit tired’ reflects the wider narratives around the stage profession’s accepted, anticipated and socially endorsed culture of hard work introduced above. Ellaline Terriss (1871–1971), who had married Seymour Hicks in 1893, was an actress renowned for her self-publicised energy and non-stop lifestyle, across society and the stage. Reflecting on one of the many interviews Terriss and Hicks gave as a couple, Tweedie light-heartedly noted that ‘Hard work seemed to agree with some people, and the incessant labour of the stage had left no trace [on the pair]: a conclusion that is notably different to Hicks’s autobiographical statement about his exhaustion and need for rest.’¹⁸

Actresses and actors’ letters concerned with holidays and rest represent a spectrum of writing, ranging from private, informal correspondence to more formal, constructed public–private letters in which a ‘performance’ of sorts is being carried out. As we have seen earlier, Irving’s personal correspondence admitted and foregrounded a need for rest, but his public persona projected a more ambivalent relationship with taking a break, in which he ‘endured’ rest: ‘Irving disliked a prolonged holiday [...] he endured inactivity bravely for a week’ recalled his friend and long-term lover Eliza Aria (1866–1931).¹⁹ Milne-Smith identifies the ‘most disturbing and fatalistic interpretation of the overworked madman’ as one in which there ‘might be no special cause to his illness beyond common social conditions that affected most members of middle-class society’.²⁰ Theatre’s stars were clearly not examples of everywoman and everyman, but the public discussions of rest and holidays that their lifestyles prompted, and the familiar models they offered, proved useful spaces to explore ideas about health and work. The tensions and the co-existence of images of hard work, vocation, health, work–life balance and rest offer an interesting viewpoint on the expectations placed on, and identities created, by theatre’s leading public representatives.

At its most balanced, press coverage of actresses and actors on holiday embodied and publicised the reciprocal relationship between work and play that lay at the core of late-Victorian public health reform, particularly in relation to ideas about leisure, productivity and health and wellbeing. *Hearth and Home*’s 1892 account of the actress Lily Hanbury (1873–1908) captures this dynamic. Hanbury was an upcoming London theatre star, known for her beauty, intelligence and family connection to the leading actress Julia Neilson (1868–1957). Her fast track to fame began with a debut in the Savoy company in 1888, and by 1892 she was working under Wilson Barrett’s management. The *Hearth and Home* account of her holiday celebrated Hanbury’s self-promoted work hard, play hard approach to her on- and off-stage life. ‘You can have no doubt but that Miss [Lily] Hanbury loves her art enthusiastically’, the column noted, ‘as she always plays with that zest which is unmindful of the reaction that must needs follow’. That reaction, it is implied, was physical, and potentially nervous, exhaustion, a risk that was evaded

by the combination of her 'buoyant youth' and the 'annual holiday she has given herself for the last ten years with her relations at Herne Bay' (on the North Kent coast).²¹ Five years later the same magazine reported that Hanbury, by then a member of Herbert Beerbohm Tree's company, had just returned from her yearly break (this time in Norfolk), 'becomingly brown and in excellent spirits again after quite an athletic holiday'.²² The use of 'again' here indicating that this was a needed holiday, an opportunity to restore both her physical and mental health.

Physical fitness, fresh air and sunshine dominate accounts of stage performers' holidays, in ways that we might more commonly connect to the 1920s. Suntans are presented as visual signals of restored health and vigour. While this relates to both actresses and actors – in 1895 *Hearth and Home* noted that 'Sir Henry Irving's holiday at Margate has quite bronzed him, and he looked very well as he left for London for an American tour' – the signalled relationship between women, theatrical health and physical strength and fitness is of particular interest.²³ For actresses, physical and mental robustness were necessary to endure the theatrical calendar and were restored through rest and holiday. Patricia Vertinsky cautions that approaches to late-nineteenth-century histories of women, physical fitness and activity must address the complex interplay of scientific discovery, medical practice, ideological approaches to female bodies and social control over them, and the unevenness of access to physical activity.²⁴ Actresses represented a specific case within these dynamics. Exercise was increasingly understood to be beneficial for women, yet the reality of women exercising continued to prompt a level of anxiety. Public debate around women's cycling, particularly its connection with the figure of the New Woman supplies a strong example of this. It was acknowledged that the pastime offered health benefits for those affluent enough to afford it. Simultaneously, it offered some respite from physical restrictions of dress and chaperoning practices that were welcome for some but concerning for others.²⁵ Reservations around women and exercise did not map neatly onto leading actresses' fit, strong bodies and their increasingly respectable identities as role models for public service. Milne-Smith notes that typically different treatment plans were prescribed for men and women who had fallen victim to overwork and that 'women were typically advised to slow down, avoid brain work, and regather their energies in the safety of the home'.²⁶ The nature of actresses' professional work unsettled such conventional gendered therapeutic approaches to mental and/or physical exhaustion, rendering their application at least nonsensical, at most impossible. Actresses' rest, at home and on holiday, is regularly characterised and reported as active rest, and the improvements in their physical appearance and tone is recorded on their return (with a key exception being periods of late pregnancy or postpartum recovery).²⁷ The tensions between women, health and the practices of physical fitness had, in part, already been resolved, or at least circumvented, in relation to actresses. The professional practices of this very visible, high-profile sub-set of women had necessitated it. Actresses' physical health and fitness positioned them both on the peripheries and at the core of constructs of

women and health. They modelled a freedom and physical fitness that was central to their increasingly respected profession and affirmed social and cultural status. Alongside their on-stage performances and off-stage public appearances, holidays and the physical after-effects of holidaying, particularly suntans and restored bodies, were key spaces and signifiers of the visible wellness that became a defining, ideal attribute of leading stage performers.

Rusticating: Health, Rest, Creativity and a Change of Air

Acknowledgment of the connection between rest, holidays and good physical and mental health had been in place since the eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century the health benefits associated with a 'Change of Air' were accepted, particularly if it was sea air.²⁸ Marketed as a 'medical commentary' founded on the research of Professor Hoffman, George Pigott's 1856 study of Harrogate's spa waters is a clear example of the secure location of 'health holidays' within scientific and popular discourses. 'Nature's wheels, in the whirl of modern times, oft-times groaning on their axles, demand the oil of relaxation', opined Pigott.²⁹ Fresh air was the solution. Hoffman's take on the change of air cure identified the healing properties of healthy air in the corporeal chemical reaction it triggered, leading to decarbonised and purified blood: a direct connection with the polluted air of urban environments. Simultaneously, however, the reference to the 'oil of relaxation' signals holidays offered additional, accepted mental and emotional health benefits.³⁰ Concerns surrounding well-being, stress and exhaustion pervade mid-century references to physical health and disorders in scientific and popular publications; 'nervous breakdown' was a familiar term by the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Richard Morris's 2018 article on the Change of Air as a Victorian medical and social construction draws on the work of James Johnson (1777–1845), an Irish surgeon. Johnson authored *Change of Air, or the Diary of a Philosopher in Pursuit of Health and Recreation* (1831), a work that chronicled his self-prescribed change of air treatments in France, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium in 1823 and 1829. Morris argues that the book did more than narrate a European journey; it also laid out a set of principles for the health benefits of travel that would mould thinking for the remainder of the nineteenth century.³¹

Key amongst Johnson's principles was the definition of 'wear and tear': a common health disorder he identified as the result of 'over-strenuous labor or exertion of the intellectual faculties' that could be resolved by the pursuit of its opposite, rest, achieved by going to other places that offered 'pure air, rural relaxation, and bodily exercise'. In this context, Morris argues, Johnson positioned holiday destinations as places of 'therapeutic geography', a reading that intersected with wider thinking around education, development and health.³² Sally Mitchell, for example, identifies the number of mid- to late-Victorian boarding schools that were located in coastal areas, reflecting the restorative and stimulating qualities connected with sea air.³³ Throughout the late nineteenth century western medicine

continued to emphasise the importance of rest and holidays for general health and as treatment plans for ill health, whether physical or mental. In an 1887 article for the *Journal of American Medicine* Boardman Reed (an American medical practitioner) referred to the common practice of ‘compulsory vacation[s]’, enforced ‘sojourn[s] at the seashore’ to benefit from ‘tonic and alterative’ sea air, echoing the language of mandatory rest that was regularly applied to the theatrical profession.³⁴

In addition to the benefits ascribed to inhalation of fresher coastal and country air, a change in location and the novelty of different sights and activities were recognised as key elements of a holiday’s therapeutic value. By the end of the nineteenth century, character and personal taste were understood to be important factors within rest: ‘rest and recreation after a long spell of fatigue depend for their value almost entirely on temperament’ reported the *Daily Telegraph* in 1890. ‘It is impossible to brace the nervous system by one uniform and consistent plan.’³⁵ Morris notes that medical practitioners were encouraged to consider ways to ‘revitalise the patient by coaxing a focus on “new objects” in new locales’.³⁶ Reports and discussions of theatre stars’ holiday destinations and activities frequently focus on their choice of quiet, remote locations and activities that centred on physical health, reading and walking. After the ‘care and fatigue of the [1876] London Season’, the ‘Theatrical Gossip’ column in the industry newspaper the *Era* recorded that Julia Neilson was

enjoying rest and seeking renewed vigour at Kissingen Bavaria [and] expresses herself delighted with the picturesque scenery of the place, and with it the pleasant contrast between its quiet, regular life and the noise and bustle and excitement of great cities.³⁷

Less successful holidays are also recorded. In 1888, Ellen Terry noted in a letter to a friend that she did not get the rest that *Horse and Hound* had reported she so needed. Driven by Irving’s desire to visit Switzerland, she holidayed in Schweizerhof, Lucerne (before moving on to Venice). While the Alpine destination might sound idyllic, in 1888 it was a cultural, holidaying hub. On this occasion the actor manager John Lawrence Toole (1830–1906) and his daughter, Florence (1866–88), were present, amongst many others. Writing to Marie Casella (c.1833–90), a close friend and mother of Ella and Nelia Casella, sculptors, wax modellers and visual artists who were members of Terry’s wider social and professional networks, Terry noted that ‘it is perfectly lovely here, but for my part I like a much quieter place’.³⁸

Holidays taken by theatre stars offered retreats from fashionable city life that encapsulate both change of air therapy and the dynamics Morris has identified in therapeutic geography. Press coverage of these celebrity breaks regularly turned to the familiar term ‘rusticating’ to describe their holiday destinations and activities. Used in a way that was specific to stage personalities, rusticating described active holidays in the country, periods of mental and physical respite removed from the speed of the metropolitan life actresses and actors in many ways represented.

For performers, rustivating had a second, professional meaning: it referred to a break between engagements or contracts, a time out that could be either restful or stressful depending on economic position and current popularity. Leading lady Terry became the archetypal rustivating theatrical celebrity, with her regular holidaying embodying and promoting current ideas around professional labour and the corresponding need for rest. In 1892, she bought a house in Winchelsea, a small East Sussex village where she had rented holiday homes since the mid-1880s. Press commentators expressed slight bemusement about the appeal of the location. Winchelsea was characterised as

a quaint, old-world place, situated on a hill, with a flat common land, intersected with ditches, stretching out to the sea. [...] There is no gas in the place and the inhabitants have to draw their water from a well.³⁹

Despite these reported deprivations, Terry was not the first to find Winchelsea charming. She bought her cottage from her friends and professional colleagues the costume designer and aesthetic dress pioneer Alice Comyns Carr (1850–1927) and her critic and playwright husband Joseph (1849–1916). Terry’s co-performer and partner Irving was also clear on the health benefits of rustivating in Winchelsea. Writing to her from his own 1890 holiday in Lowestoft, Irving instructed Terry to rest and assured her the air will ‘revive her like magic’.⁴⁰ Press reports clearly indicate that Terry became known for – indeed, deliberately publicised – the distinct ‘out-of-town’ life that she lived in Winchelsea, an alternative existence that restored her from the fatigues of society and the stage.⁴¹ The appeal of the simplicity and informality of time spent rustivating was further endorsed by Ellaline Terriss’s preference for holidaying in ‘a place where I need not wear gloves, and a hat is not a necessity [...] I have so much dressing up in my life that it is a holiday to be without it’.⁴² Time away from the places and conventions associated with metropolitan society offered not only fresh air and nature, it also supplied a temporary escape from the routines and some of the expectations that demarcated and framed the on- and off-stage lives of celebrity stage performers.

Cromer: Holidaying with the Stars

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the most high-profile holiday destination for late-nineteenth-century theatrical celebrities was the small, North Norfolk town of Cromer. Cromer was, and remains, very isolated. In the mid nineteenth century its primary attractions were the bracing air coming in off the North Sea and its spectacular sunsets and sunrises. Tourist literature from this period recommends the town’s health-promoting sea air and waters, and the unusual geological features of the coastal landscape.⁴³ There was, by all accounts, little else to see. After a slow, small, but steady, growth of tourism during the middle decades of the century, everything changed for Cromer and its inhabitants during the 1880s, when the town was transformed into a fashionable holiday resort

closely associated with London's social, cultural and political elites and royalty. Remote, and devoid of metropolitan attractions, distractions and business, Cromer supplied an ideal site for high-profile celebrity rustication.

Cromer's boom as an exclusive holiday location is credited to two writers closely connected with London's fashionable theatre scene: the journalist, playwright and theatrical critic Clement Scott (1841–1904) and the author and playwright George R. Sims (1841–1904). Scott visited the North Norfolk coast in the summer of 1883, as part of a commission to write a series of travel columns for the *Daily Telegraph*. He settled in lodgings at Overstrand (a small area just outside of Cromer), and from there he crafted the idyll of 'Poppyland' from the surrounding coastal landscape and its people.⁴⁴ Further articles followed, which were then collated and published in book form in 1886. History attributes Poppyland's fame primarily to Scott. Scott himself identified Sims as the individual who 'fed the flame' and 'opened the stage door and lit the theatre at Poppyland'. What is clear is that following the publication of Scott's articles, theatrical celebrities were a high-profile group amongst the Cromer craze that ensued. Scott notes that Sims attracted the actor-manager and playwright Wilson Barrett (1846–1904), actor and playwright Henry Pettitt (1848–93) and librettist and playwright Robert Reece (1838–91) to the North Norfolk town, where they would use their time together as an opportunity for collaboration and writing.⁴⁵ As editor of the *Theatre*, Scott used an 1885 issue of the journal as a vehicle for his popular poem 'The Garden of Sleep', inspired by the cliff top graveyard and abandoned tower of the former Sidestrand Church, just along the coast from Cromer. Its adaptation to music by Isidore de Lara and sheet music sales increased the familiarity of the small coastal town, weaving its landscapes into the fabric of London culture and its entertainment industry.

Throughout the mid-1880s Cromer became known as the regular holiday destination of theatre managers, actresses and actors including Irving, George Alexander (1858–1918), Hermann Vezin (1829–1910), Maud Tree (1863–1937), Herbert Beerbohm Tree and John Hare (1844–1921).⁴⁶ Others followed, or were entertained as guests, such as those hosted during the Trees' 1891 summer house party, when they 'secured a charming house overlooking the sea' to entertain 'friends – musical, artistic and literary – from London'.⁴⁷ Additional theatrical personalities recorded as having visited Cromer include Virginia Bateman and Edward Compton (as discussed earlier in this article), Ellen Terry, Lillie Langtry (1853–1929), Olga Nethersole (1867–1951), Nellie Bensor (1875–1961), and Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), and there were doubtless others.⁴⁸ Fashionable holiday makers and the attraction of Cromer's 'invigorating as champagne' sea air created a summertime 'literary and artistic quarter' in the town.⁴⁹ Captured by Maud Tree on her first visit in 1887 as 'a huge church, two tiny streets and a sea!', by the mid-1880s, summertime in this small town on the North Sea coast was a microcosm of London's West End culture.⁵⁰ On occasions, the tables were turned and Cromer featured as a dramatic location in theatrical productions at London venues including the Lyceum and the Standard, and as far afield as the Theatre Royal in Sydney,

Australia.⁵¹ Part of Cromer's ongoing appeal can be attributed to its combination of isolation and accessibility. Since the town's connection to the rail network in 1877, visitors could return to the capital for short business trips without too considerable an interruption to their holiday. Simultaneously, Cromer's renowned isolation enabled the playing out of theatre professionals' ambiguous relationship with rest, as identified earlier. Theatrical personalities and writers formed part of a larger group of familiar figures who 'return[ed] to the neighbourhood year after year', including a number of well-known Liberal politicians.⁵² As the *Evening News and Post* concluded in 1890, 'Celebrities go to Cromer and all the world follows'.⁵³

Fuelled by these fashionable celebrity associations, the Poppyland image created by Scott and developed by Sims flourished. Recognition of its commercial potential prompted local and national production of Poppyland cosmetics, clothing, ceramics and textiles. 'Poppyland Bouquet' perfume, produced by Cromer's chemist and local councillor Daniel Davison, was advertised nationally in *Chemist and Druggist* and sold internationally. Tea sets produced by Staffordshire potteries and poppy-themed jewellery were available in Cromer's shops and nationwide.⁵⁴ The fashion industry responded, with the late 1880s seeing a flurry of ready-to-wear Cromer dresses and fabrics named after the town.⁵⁵ An 1889 issue of the *Sporting Gazette* instructed its readers that the costume they needed for their next ball was a poppy dress: 'The front and sides of the dress are all of loose hanging petals [...] crinkled up exactly like a newly opened poppy [and available] in any shade to be found in Poppyland'.⁵⁶ There is also evidence that the image of the poppy fed in to wider aesthetic trends: its fusion with emerging Art Nouveau motifs inspired ranges of wallpaper and fabrics, with some prints named directly after the town and others, including Liberty fabrics, representing a more general theme.⁵⁷ The two train companies that served Cromer by 1887 also harnessed Poppyland imagery to encourage visitors to use their regular services to reach the North Norfolk coast.

Late-Victorian holiday resorts were then, as now, organised within a hierarchy. From seaside resorts to mountain ranges, countryside retreats to city breaks, society's fashionable representatives created exclusive destinations that were rooted in ideas surrounding culture and class. In 1875 the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* adopted a theatrical metaphor to depict this familiar holiday hierarchy: the 'usual frequenters of the pit are thronging Margate and Ramsgate, or convenient Gravesend [while] the boxes and stalls are to be looked for upon the breezy heaths of Scotland, or among the glaciers of Switzerland'.⁵⁸ By the 1880s Cromer was located at the pinnacle of the Victorian hierarchy of holiday destinations. As one visitor recorded: its 'shops cater for the well-lined purses – that you understand at a glance' and its 'hotels [...] would probably scorn the family of modest means. Altogether the evidence of Cromer's wealth and good fortune is almost aggressive'.⁵⁹ 'It is not for the tripper', reported Albert B. Osborne in a book on England written for an American readership, 'titled names are on the visitors' book'.⁶⁰ Escaping the masses by retreating to such remote, exclusive

locations signalled the holidaymaker's cultural and economic status. The production of Cromer-based merchandise available at a range of price points indicates that the North Norfolk holiday-making of stage favourites became aspirational: if a trip to the fashionable town was not possible, a connection with it through an object, scent, fabric or item of clothing could be achieved.

For theatrical personalities, choosing Cromer also meant stepping away from the entertainment industry that formed their everyday working and social lives and that they represented and sustained through their celebrity. Cromer had no theatre. A holiday there did not offer theatrical entertainment. Some considered it dull. 'Leaves from the Diary of a Visitor to Cromer', published by the conservative, comic magazine *Moonshine* in 1890 concluded with its tourist narrator discovering the nearby seaside resort of Great Yarmouth, describing it as 'an intoxicating place' and writing that while Cromer might be 'select, beautifully picturesque, and altogether charming', 'for rollicking fun give me Yarmouth [...] I shan't go back to Cromer'.⁶¹ In the summer of 1897 the *Daily Telegraph* noted that Cromer's visitors were increasingly in need of some form of entertainment, a call that was answered by the installation of a band playing on the promenade. In contrast, Great Yarmouth had three piers, offering music, dancing and comic songs from morning to night.⁶² Cromer's remoteness was celebrated and protected by many of the town's leading figures. The gradual provision of entertainment, tourist activities and facilities – 'inducements to an invading element, the absence of which has been its particular charm in the past, and has made it so popular as a fashionable resort' – was fiercely debated by the local community at every turn.⁶³ Writing on the importance of considering sports provision in seaside holiday destinations during the same timeframe, A. J. Durie and M. J. Huggins note that 'British [seaside] resorts varied, and continue to vary, in size and social tone. [...] Some, mostly smaller resorts were select middle and professional class preserves; others were mass and popular'.⁶⁴ Sports provision varied accordingly. The offer was designed to attract and reflect the tourist market, as was entertainment.

The relative absence of theatrical performance and seafront entertainments at Cromer does not mean holidaymakers were idle. Echoing ideas around the importance of sight-seeing, activity and novelty, Richard Foulkes's assertion that 'Even on holiday the Victorians felt the obligation to take part in enjoyable and preferably worthwhile pursuits' reflects Cromer's middle- to high-class tourists.⁶⁵ There are accounts of Irving visiting Norwich Museum and being inspired by processional dragon puppets, and of regular golfing, swimming and daily coastal promenades undertaken by Irving, Alexander and the Trees.⁶⁶ The key publicised pursuit undertaken at Cromer, however, was rest, which was understood as a worthwhile and necessary activity in and of itself in the context of theatre's leading celebrities. Cromer's tourist heyday lasted into the first decades of the twentieth century, but by the late 1890s accounts of the town are typified by a sense of nostalgia, a regret that the remote quietness of the North Norfolk town was a thing of the past. Theatre's celebrities had contributed to Cromer's exclusive image and benefitted

from it. They had also played key roles in the town's development, increased visitor numbers and the eventual arrival of tourist-focused attractions and entertainments.

Working Holidays

Running alongside the dominant discourse that connected the theatrical profession, hard work, public service, and a socially endorsed need for rest, is a clear pattern of stage performers' holidays that included, or centred around, work. The flipside of the acknowledged need for rest was the strong, prevailing imagery of the theatre as an industry that never stopped – the origins of the burn out risk discussed earlier. Late nineteenth-century actresses and actors were not immune to the culture of workaholism that remains a hazard of those careers characterised as vocational today. The holidays that included work can be usefully separated into three categories. The first is the 'working holiday': a break that afforded actors, writers and producers a hiatus from the routine business of London life and enabled creative focus. A retreat. Evidence indicates many of London's highest-earning theatre professionals removed themselves from the city to write, plan or prepare for roles. This change of place served as a semi-ritualistic act, part of the framework they placed around their creative process. Sites in and around Cromer were popular locations for these working holidays. In the summer of 1892 Oscar Wilde wrote the first draft of *A Woman of No Importance* during a stay at Grove Farm, Felbrigg (just outside of Cromer).⁶⁷ Tree, the actor-manager who had commissioned Wilde's 1892 play, also headed to the Norfolk coast for space to reflect, create and study for his role as Hamlet.⁶⁸ In 1894 Olga Nethersole retreated to Grove Farm, a space she identified in a letter to Irving as her 'haven', to study for her forthcoming appearance as Juliet.⁶⁹ In a July 1896 letter to the dramatic critic and playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), Terry – an advocate for holidays – expressed her need for 'a holiday and to look at the grass, and the Sea! And to finish studying Imogen', proving herself a fan of the working holiday too.⁷⁰ Her 1890 break in Winchelsea, when Irving had instructed her to rest, was in part dedicated to studying for her upcoming role as Lucy of Lammermore.⁷¹ Rusticating was, at least in part, a performance. Mr Joseph Hatton's 'Cigarette Papers' column in a 1900 edition of the *People* recorded that Irving was again in Cromer and 'in the intervals of rest and recreation' he is studying for the part of Manfred.⁷²

Stage performers' correspondence and press accounts clearly signal that creative energy was associated with time away from the city and, again, this connection particularly focused on breaks that offered the widely accepted restorative properties of sea air. There was a fine line between this model of the working holiday, a break where fresh air, creative work, and rest intersected, and what I identify as the 'workaholi-day'. Traces of the workaholi-day culture have already been visible in this article. Irving's articulation of a conflicted approach to holidays, Compton's understated admission to being a 'bit tired', and the views of the Old Stager

published by the *Daily Telegraph* have offered examples of the familiar narrative of an aversion to stopping and a battle against the impetus to work constantly. A key figure in the history of theatre's self-styled workaholics on holiday can be discovered in George Bernard Shaw. He and Terry were regular correspondents during the 1890s, and in August 1896 Shaw wrote a lengthy letter to her from his holidays, stating with what appears to be martyr-ish complaint:

What a holiday this has been! I have never worked so hard in my life. Four hours writing in the morning, four hours bicycling the afternoon every day.⁷³

Shaw was in Suffolk at the time, staying with the social reformer and economist Beatrice Webb (1858–1943), her husband Sidney (1859–1947), several other high-profile Fabians, the American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935) and his future wife, Charlotte Payne-Townsend (1857–1943) at Stratford St Andrew Rectory, Saxmundham.⁷⁴ The summer house party represents a decamping of his city life to the countryside: work was the focus, with recreational daily exercise also presented as a form of hard labour. The summer of 1896 was not a one off. In 1897 Terry wrote to Shaw while he was ostensibly on holiday. The questions she asks in the letter are telling: 'When does your holiday end? Are you most of your time working? I guess you are?'⁷⁵ Shaw was not a well-known playwright in the 1890s, but the merging of his personal identity and professional activity – of time at work and at play – clearly indicates how the working holiday could, and regularly did, cross the line for those involved in the theatre industry.

The third category of working holiday that can be identified is the 'accidental working holiday', an unplanned collision of work and rest. A clear example of this takes us back to Cromer. The flourishing world of amateur fundraising entertainments had reached even the remotest of towns. Visiting in August 1898, Irving, the actor manager John Hare (then at the height of his English and American fame), Hare's son Gilbert (1869–1951) and daughter-in-law Helene (née Stern, 1869–1942), who were members of Hare's theatrical company, found themselves headlining a charity performance staged in aid of Cromer's Cottage Hospital.⁷⁶ 'Sir Henry Irving has not been permitted to pass his holiday without a practical reminder of the profession of which he is the acknowledged head', recorded the 'Things Theatrick' column of *London News of the Week*.⁷⁷ For local philanthropists, the opportunity for fundraising Irving presented was irresistible; for Cromer's amateur performers, the thrill of appearing alongside West End stars rewarded their charitable activity. 'Of course Irving's presence in Cromer provoked the astute in the philanthropic direction', recalled Mrs Aria in her memoirs.⁷⁸ The entertainment was staged in the Drawing Room of the recently opened, fashionable Royal Links Hotel. Irving offered some of his most well-known recitations: Thomas Hood's 1831 dramatic poem 'The Dream of Eugene Aram' (the tale of a murderer that may well have evoked his audience's memories of his renowned performances as the murderer Mathias from *The Bells*), 'The Uncle', 'Gemini et Virgo' and 'Copperfield and the Waiter'.⁷⁹ Aside from 'Copperfield and the

Waiter', these pieces were familiar from Irving's appearances at London's elite charity occasions in theatres, hotels and private homes. At the cliff top hotel they reached new, regional elite audiences. Interestingly 'Copperfield and the Waiter' was an exception, being a more comic, light-hearted choice than Irving opted for in London. Through this performance Cromer's audiences got to see a side of the West End star's acting that was very rarely seen in the capital at the time, and perhaps the opportunity to perform outside of his established London canon was appealing to Irving.⁸⁰ The Cromer hospital entertainment made the front page of the following week's fashionable weekly the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

It seems now that when an actor wants a real holiday he just goes and acts. It must be so, for we hear that Sir Henry Irving, Mr John Hare, together with Mr and Mrs Gilbert Hare, all of whom we imagined holiday-making, recently appeared at Cromer.⁸¹

On the day Irving appeared in this charity entertainment at the Royal Links Hotel, *News of the Week* published a column on how personal taste was key to a successful holiday. Discussing stage performers on vacation, the author noted that it was well known that the

actor whose ideal holiday, one would have imagined, would have been spent far from the glare of the footlights and the stuffy atmosphere of the theatre almost invariably passes at least a portion of his hard-earned leisure in watching other people act.⁸²

This article has explored the range of holidaying practices connected with actresses and actors, and its conclusions challenge this prevailing image of theatre people vacationing in theatres. However, what is clear is that even in the remotest of locations such as Cromer – a holiday destination with no theatre – divisions between work and holiday were often blurred for theatrical personalities, either by themselves or by others. The social expectations placed on stage performers did not take a break, reflecting the popular construct of leading theatre stars as professionals that were always 'on', always 'at work' or engaged in public service, until the point that this labour and resulting fatigue necessitated rest. Working holidays varied from studying a part, to working in a different location, to participating in theatrical events staged at holiday destinations. Each of these versions of the working holiday were entwined with the identities of the individual performer and of the profession she or he represented.


The holidays taken by stage celebrities were in public, private and public-private spaces that cemented and influenced the image and reputation of the stage profession and engaged with wider discourses around public health reform and physical and mental good health. Public knowledge of where actresses and actors chose to holiday served wider images of the profession. The places they patronised were testament to social status and networks, cultural presence and capital. Vacationing in the 'right' place cemented celebrity identity, benefitted the holiday

destination and contributed to the collective image of the theatrical profession. The act of holidaying prompted reiterations of the hard work narratives and the taking of well-deserved rest that affirmed and further promoted the labour of performance and public service that increasingly defined both the profession's collective identity and the individual celebrity identities of its most familiar representatives. It simultaneously draws attention to the regular exhaustion experienced by stage performers. Alongside the social and cultural benefits to the theatre industry and to local tourist economies, wider narratives around rest and health were captured and promoted in coverage of theatrical celebrities' holidays. Stage stars 'seen' on vacation reflected, modelled and offered space for discussions around rest and the social imperative of balancing work and play. Exploring and understanding how, where, why and with whom leading theatrical performers holidayed offers an access point to increased understanding of the professional practices and status of the stage at this moment in its history and reveals engagement between the theatre industry and key ideas connected with public health reform. As Ellen Terry asserted, 'What donkeys we all are to have all work and no play'.⁸³

Acknowledgements

In February 2020 I took what proved to be a very fortuitously timed research trip to Cromer. Aside from that one visit, the majority of the research for this article has taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic and relied almost entirely on digital sources. I would like to thank both the peer reviewers for this article, for their time and constructive comments during this challenging period and the journal editors for their care and support.

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Notes

1. The holiday destinations of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, Winifred Emery (1861–1924) and Emery's husband Cyril Maude (1862–1951) were covered in the column. "'Whispers", by The Gossip', *Hearth and Home*, 29 July 1897, p. 489.
2. Regular accounts appeared in the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *New York Times*, *Morning Post*, *Times*, *Sketch*, *Country Life*, *Stage*, *Sketch*, *Women's Penny Paper*, *Sporting Times*, *Hearth and Home*, *Era*, *Horse and Hound*, *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, *Judy*, *Moonshine*, *London Mainly About People*, *Lloyds' Weekly Newspaper* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*.
3. Collections of actresses and actors' letters have been mined for biographical and theatrical evidence and used as key sources of information about stage productions, professional careers, and personal and social networks. I have sought to cast the net widely in the research for this article, to 'catch' as many performers and their experiences as possible. Working with correspondence has its limitations, however, and the questions around the evidence that remains and the cultural hierarchisation it represents should be addressed at the outset. The celebrity culture of the late-Victorian period does not neatly

map on to the theatrical figures who are most represented in our archives. Cultural hierarchies and the tastes of collectors and scholars have played a significant role in the archival canon of celebrities we have access to today. Individuals that audiences would have recognised and identified as ‘A list’ theatre stars occasionally intersect with those most represented in collections, but there were many more stage favourites who remain relatively unknown to us now. Their relative archival absence can be addressed – in part – through press accounts, which offer information about a wider body of popular personalities.

4. ‘Girlhood of Leading Actresses’, *Lloyds’ Weekly Newspaper*, 26 December 1897, p. 11.
5. See Catherine Hindson, *London’s West End Actresses and the Origins of Celebrity Charity, 1880–1920* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016).
6. Seymour Hicks, *Twenty-Four Years of an Actor’s Life* (London: Alston Rivers, 1910), p. 150.
7. A. A. B, ‘Theatrical Notes’, *West End Review*, 1 September 1898, p. 40.
8. Hicks, *Twenty-Four Years of an Actor’s Life*, p. 224.
9. ‘Current News about Women’, *Women’s Penny Paper*, 9 September 1890, p. 567.
10. Ellen Terry, Edith Craig and Christabel Marshall, *Ellen Terry’s Memoirs* (London: V. Gollancz, 1933), p. 28.
11. An Old Stager, ‘Resting’, *Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1898, p. 4.
12. ‘Town and Country Gossip’, *Horse and Hound Magazine*, 30 June 1888, p. 381.
13. Henry Irving to Adelina Patti, 19 June 1891, Shakespeare Centre Archive and Library Correspondence. Henry Irving Correspondence Database <<https://www.henryirving.co.uk/correspondence>> [consulted 20 May 2020].
14. *The Sketch*, 17 August 1898, p. 146.
15. Amy Milne-Smith, ‘Work and Madness: Overworked Men and Fear of Degeneration, 1860s–1910s’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 24:2 (2019), 159–78, 160.
16. Mrs (Ethel) Alec Tweedie, *Behind the Footlights* (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1904), p. 133.
17. ‘Theatrical Gossip’, *Era*, 25 June 1887, p. 13.
18. Tweedie, *Behind the Footlights*, p. 56.
19. Mrs (Eliza Davis) Aria, *My Sentimental Self* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1922), p. 97. Aria and Irving’s relationship followed the ending of his relationship with Ellen Terry.
20. Milne-Smith, ‘Work and Madness’, p. 171. By the 1880s the acting profession was accredited with higher status in society. In part this can be attributed to an increase in middle-class, educated performers entering the industry and the drive to stage plays that aligned theatre with the late-Victorian period’s larger national cultural improvement project. See Jeffrey Richards, *Sir Henry Irving: A Victorian Actor and his World* (London: A&C Black, 2007), pp. 66–7 for background on theatre and class in the period under discussion here.
21. ‘People, Places and Things’, *Hearth and Home*, 31 March 1892, p. 608. The article was republished in *The Dart*, 23 September 1892, p. 4.
22. *Hearth and Home*, 23 September 1897, p. 773.
23. *Hearth and Home*, 5 September 1895, p. 578.
24. Patricia A. Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 77.
25. *Ibid.*

26. Milne-Smith, 'Work and Madness', p. 161.
27. Maud Tree's correspondence (housed at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection) offers insight into actresses, rest, childbirth and post-partum recovery.
28. John Hassan, *The Seaside, Health and the Environment in England and Wales Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2003), <ProQuest Ebook Central> [accessed 12 May 2020].
29. George West Royston Pigott, *On the Harrogate Spas, and Change of Air* (London: Churchill, 1856), p. 46.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Richard E. Morris, 'The Victorian "Change of Air" as Medical and Social Construction', *Journal of Tourism History*, 10:1 (2018), 49–65.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 50. See also, Neville Wood, *Health Resorts of the British Isles* (London: University of London, 1912).
33. Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, Daily Life through History Series, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), p. 181.
34. Boardman Reed, *Diseased Conditions for which Sea Air is of Doubtful Benefit* (1887, first published in *The Journal of American Medicine*, no publisher), pp. 2 and 7. Reed's treatise opens with the conditions that sea air does improve, including nervous exhaustion and breakdown.
35. *Daily Telegraph*, 14 August 1890, p. 3.
36. Morris, 'The Victorian "Change of Air"', p. 49.
37. 'Theatrical Gossip', *Era*, 30 July 1876, p. 13.
38. Ellen Terry to Marie Casella, 9 August 1888. Katherine Cockin (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Ellen Terry* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), p. 187. The closeness of Terry and the Casella sisters is captured by beads from both Ella and Nelia forming part of Terry's friendship bead necklace that is now in the care of the National Trust at Smallhythe Place, near Tenterden, England; NT1117793.2.
39. 'Flashes from the Footlights', *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, 16 September 1890, p. 442.
40. Henry Irving to Ellen Terry, 25 July 1890. V&A Theatre Collections. Henry Irving Correspondence Database <<https://www.henryirving.co.uk/correspondence>> [consulted 20 May 2020].
41. There are many examples of this in the 1890s' press, but a strong model can be found in the interview with Terry published in the *Southampton Herald* on 19 January 1895, p. 3.
42. Tweedie, *Behind the Footlights*, p. 57.
43. See Walter Rye, *Cromer: Past and Present* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1889), pp. 144–5.
44. Scott's *Daily Telegraph* article, 'Poppy-Land', appeared on 30 August 1883 (p. 3) and was followed four days later by 'A Day in Poppy-Land (3 September 1883, p. 2). Other 'Poppy-land Papers' appeared over the next three years and the full series was collated and re-published in the book *Poppyland* (London: Carson and Comerford, 1886). Martin Warren's *Cromer* (Cromer: Poppyland Publishing, 2012); Andy Reid's edited volume *Cromer and Sheringham: The Growth of the Holiday Trade 1877–1914* (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies & Historical Association, Norfolk & Norwich Branch, 1986) and David Thornton's *Echoes of History: Poppyland, 1883–1914* (Cromer: Poppyland Publishing, 2017) have enabled me to understand the local histories of Cromer and its development as a holiday destination.
45. Clement Scott, 'Poppyland as it Was', *The Idler*, vol. 2, 1893, pp. 218–20, pp. 218–9.

46. 'Dramatic and Musical', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1891, p. 3.
47. 'Gleanings', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 July 1891, p. 3.
48. The named feature in a report of the funeral of Alfred Jermy, who owned the mill guest house where many of these figures stayed. 'A Norfolk Celebrity', *Daily Herald*, 1 January 1917, p. 5; Thornton, *Echoes of History*, pp. 149–52. Thornton uses H. C. Dent's *Reminiscences of a Cromer Doctor* (Holt: Norfolk Press Syndicate, 192?) extensively in his discussion of the town's celebrity visitors. Consulting this work was not possible due to its limited print run and availability and the pandemic, which is regrettable.
49. 'By the Silver Sea', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 April 1890, p. 3; 'Dramatic and Musical', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 July 1890, p. 3.
50. Maud Tree, 'Herbert and I', in M. Beerbohm (ed.), *Herbert Beerbohm Tree: Some Memories of Him and of his Art* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1924), p. 80.
51. For example, George Lander and Walter Melville's *The Great World of London*, Standard Theatre October 1898 (revived March 1899) and Oscar Barrett's fairytale pantomime *Santa Claus* for the Lyceum Theatre's 1894–5 autumn/winter season. Frederick Melville's *Between Two Women*, staged at the Theatre Royal, Sydney in 1905 also included a scene of Poppyland, near Cromer and the character of a Cromer vicar.
52. Wood, *Health Resorts of the British Isles*, p. 145; 'Notes on Holiday Haunts: Politicians in Poppyland', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 September 1892, p. 1.
53. 'Cromer's Coming Rival. An Undiscovered Poppyland for Holiday-makers on the Norfolk Coast', *Evening News and Post* (London), 11 July 1890, p. 1.
54. Cromer Museum has a large collection of Poppyland products and souvenirs amongst its collections, including ceramics, jewellery, postcards and fragrance.
55. See, for example, The Cromer Dress in 'Description of Our Engravings', *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, XIV: 9, 1 September 1888, 543; Cromer Tweed in 'Spinnings in Town', *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, 1 September 1887, 457; Cromer Twill (a woollen fabric) in 'Spring Materials', *Le Follet*, 1 March 1890, p. 100 and the Cromer seaside dress for children in 'Current Modes for Children', *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, 1 September 1889, 488.
56. *Country Gentleman, Sporting Gazette and 'The Man About Town'*, 14 September 1889, p. 1248.
57. The V&A hold a sample of 'Cromer Bird Fabric', designed by Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo and produced by Simpson and Godlee in 1884. Liberty's 'Poppyland' fabric was manufactured in 1912 (Whitworth Collection, Liberty Archives) but many earlier designs feature the poppy motif. Email conversation with Anna Buruma, Archivist, Liberty Archives, 23 January 2020.
58. 'Musical and Theatrical', *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 1 September 1875, p. 160.
59. Unidentified 1880s newspaper report, cited in Warren, *Cromer*, pp. 22–3.
60. Albert B. Osborne, *As It is in England* (New York: McBride and Company, 1923), p. 51.
61. 'Leaves from the Diary of a Visitor at Cromer', *Moonshine*, 6 September 1890, p. 118.
62. 'By the Silver Sea', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 August 1890, p. 3.
63. Provision of entertainment for visitors was a controversial subject in the Cromer area, and one that drew in local landowners and public figures. The debate surrounding whether a town hall should be constructed offers a clear example of this.

- The *Norwich Argus* recorded that at a meeting he chaired, Benjamin Bond-Cabbell (the Lord of the Manor of Cromer Hall and the town's main landowner) stated clearly that 'he did not share the feeling that Cromer should be kept for the few, but thought it should be for the many. They must not look at it from a selfish point of view, but should wish to see the place increase and thrive and become a prosperous locality. They should offer visitors every attraction'. *Argus* (Norwich), 16 December 1889, cited in Reid (ed.), *Cromer and Sheringham*, p. 13.
64. A. J. Durie & M. J. Huggins, 'Sport, Social Tone and the Seaside Resorts of Great Britain, c.1850–1914', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15:1 (1998), 173–87, 173.
 65. Richard Foulkes, *Lewis Carroll and the Victorian Stage: Theatricals in a Quiet Life*, The Nineteenth Century Series (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2005), p. 189.
 66. 'Strolling over to the [Norwich] Museum [then in the walls of the city's castle] I saw Henry Irving lost in admiration before an old "property" dragon which had been used in Mayors' processions from the fifteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century.' *Country Life Magazine*, vol. 4, 1898, p. 248. The large-scale civic processional puppet that attracted Irving's attention is known as the Snap dragon. Norwich Museums hold three versions of the puppet. The earliest dates from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries and is thought to be one of the original Pockthorpe (a city district) Snaps. It is likely this was the puppet Irving saw. Email communication with Samantha Johns, Collections Development Manager, Norfolk Museums Services, 20 December 2019.
 67. Oscar Wilde to Herbert Beerbohm Tree, 1 September 1892. Rupert Hart-Davis (ed.), *The Letters of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p. 320.
 68. Clement Scott, 'A Chat with Mr Herbert Beerbohm Tree', *The Sphere*, 13 September 1893, pp. 1–2.
 69. Olga Nethersole to Henry Irving, 15 July 1894, V&A Theatre Collections. Henry Irving Correspondence Database <<https://www.henryirving.co.uk/correspondence>> [consulted 20 May 2020].
 70. Ellen Terry to George Bernard Shaw, 7 July 1896. Christopher St John (ed.), *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence* (London: Reinhardt and Evans, 1949), p. 30.
 71. 'Music and the Drama', *Glasgow Herald*, 31 March 1890, p. 13.
 72. Joseph Hatton, 'Cigarette Papers', *People*, 19 August 1900, p. 2.
 73. George Bernard Shaw to Ellen Terry, 28 August 1896, in St John (ed.), *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence*, p. 40.
 74. Hesketh Pearson, *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Personality* (London: Atheneum, 1963), p. 199; Janice J. Kirkland, 'Aminadversions and Obstacles', in Cynthia J. Davis and Denise D. Knight (eds), *Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Her Contemporaries* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), pp. 87–109, p. 88.
 75. Ellen Terry to George Bernard Shaw, 30 August 1897, in St John (ed.), *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence*, p. 228.
 76. The performance took place on Saturday 13 August 1898. 'Drama in Poppyland', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 August 1898, p. 9.
 77. 'Things Theatrick', *London News of the Week*, 20 August 1898, p. 2.
 78. Aria, *My Sentimental Self*, p. 97.
 79. The luxurious Royal Links Hotel opened in 1895. Its golf course was a favourite of the Prince of Wales. It offered superior facilities: 'Standing in its own grounds of seven acres'; 'unrivalled on the East coast for its splendid position'; 'magnificent sea and land

views'; 'immediately adjoining the golf links'; 'contains about 80 bed and sitting rooms, coffee room, private dining rooms, reading room, drawing room, smoking room, billiard room, 3 tennis courts, stabling for 12–15 horses'; 'the most scientific sanitary arrangements'. *Morning Post*, 28 June 1895, p. 9. I have written elsewhere about theatrical celebrities' use of the recitation as a fundraising performance form in fashionable charity entertainments in Hindson, *London's West End Actresses* (2016), pp. 171–5.

80. 'Things Theatrick', *London News of the Week*, 20 August 1898, p. 2.

81. 'Theatrical Notes', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 August 1898, p. 1.

82. 'Grain and Chaff', *News of the Week*, 13 August 1898, p. 2.

83. Ellen Terry to George Bernard Shaw, 1 January 1897 in St John (ed.), *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence*, p. 131.

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