LACY'S ACTING EDITION COMPLETE.—1,500 Plays in 100 Vols. of 15 Numbers each, with indexes; Library Edition, handsomely bound in half-calf, price 7s. per Volume, sold singly or in sets.

₊ *They are the most perfect Edition of Plays ever published, and no Library can be considered complete without them.*

"The most perfect edition of plays ever published": the Digital Lacy project
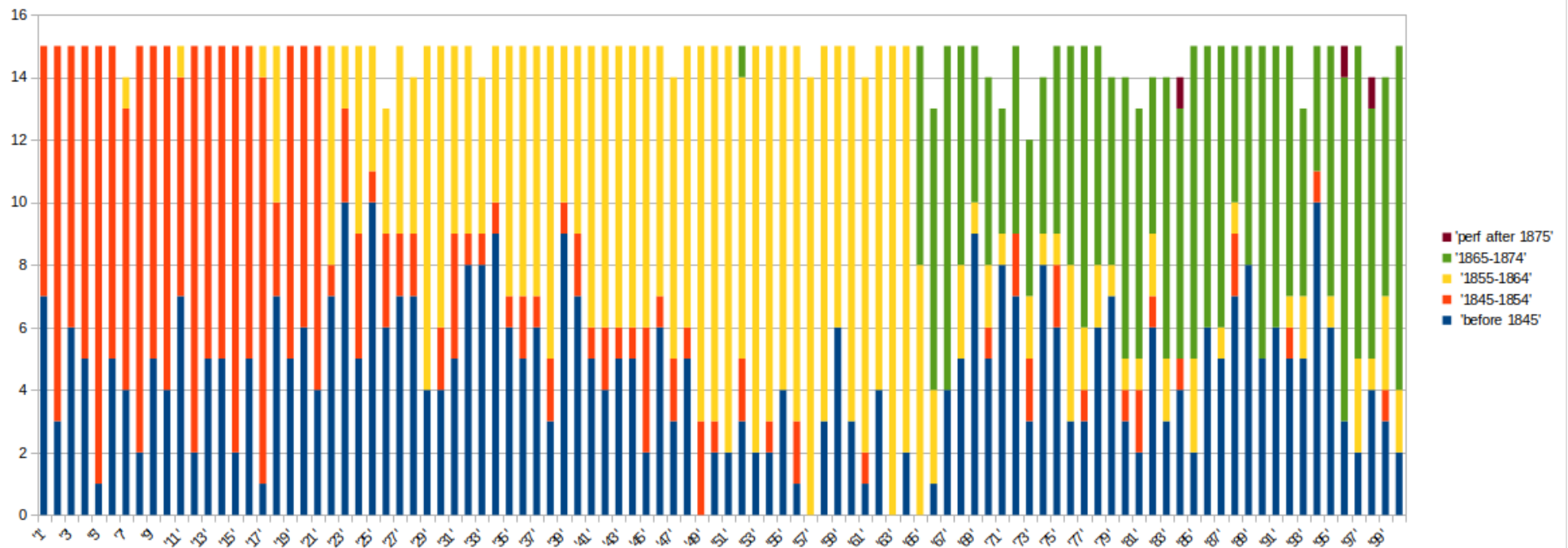
Lou Burnard (Independent Scholar)

Thomas Hailes Lacy (1809-1873)

- Lacy was the leading theatrical publisher of "Acting Editions" -- practical working documents printed at 6d a copy for individual titles, or 5s for a bound volume of 15 titles.
- Between 1848 and 1873, his *Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays*, grew to contain 100 volumes of 15 titles each: it was sold across the globe, and made him a reasonable fortune.
- The LAE is a unique sample, apparently covering the full range of Victorian Theatrical presentations
- The population it samples approximates to the titles listed in vols 4 and 5 of Allardyce Nicoll's magisterial *History of English Drama* -- c. 24,000 distinct titles performed between 1800 and 1900.

Research question: how representative is the LAE ?

A corpus is a sample, hopefully representative of a known population. Initial comparisons between the LAE and Allardyce Nicoll's *Handlists* suggest distributions of size, age, and mode are comparable.

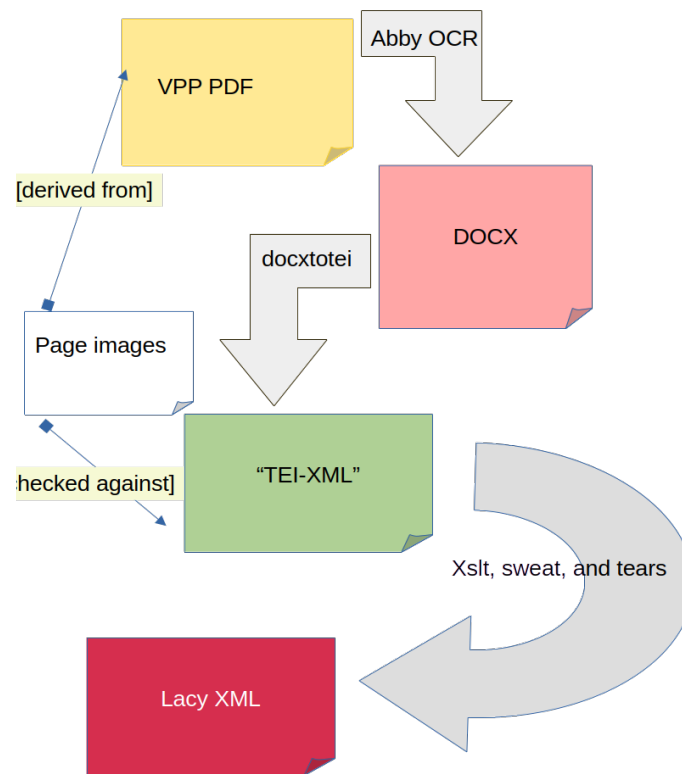*First performance dates by volume*

"It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Lacy astutely leavened the mix for each volume, using mainly contemporary titles to complement the old favourites." (cf. How old are these plays?)

Digital Lacy project

- Builds on and expands data from Richard Pearson's *Victorian Plays Project* (VPP), AHRB funded 2005-2007
-   - The VPP produced a catalogue of the LAE, along with c. 15,000 page images from a copy held at Birmingham Library
    - These were OCRd, proofed, and made available in a PDF format as visually faithful as possible to the original
    - By 2014, the project had processed 340 titles which were distributed from a site at the University of Galway
    - Following Pearson's death in 2018, the project was frozen; by June 2022 the website had disappeared...
- In 2022, with the aid of researchers who worked on the project, I recovered most of the resources it had created and transferred them to a github repository, where I continue to work on them
- Digital Lacy now combines :
    - a detailed and expanding set of metadata relating to the LAE and its authors, enhanced with links to available digital versions
    - a slowly increasing number of TEI-XML transcripts

Proto-website at http://lb42.github.io/Lacy

Current workflow

- Goal is consistent minimal encoding of a known source edition
- VPP texts:
  ○ VPP-PDF to Docx (OCR by Abby, thanks Huma-num)
  ○ DocX to TEI-All (XSLT by TEI)
  ○ TEI-All to Lacy XML (homegrown XSLT scripts)
- Minimal markup, largely ignoring visual salience
- TEI schema defined by ODD very close to dracor-schema

Impossible without manual intervention: this is the main bottleneck in current workflow.

DraCor vs Lacy: how close ?

DraCor and Lacy have a few ideological differences...

- In DraCor metadata, the digital version is primary, any source version being nested within it; in Lacy, that hierarchy is reversed.
- Some DraCor metadata (notably performances and identifiers) is relegated to a <standOff>; in Lacy it is imbricated in the TEI Header
- DraCor uses explicit scene divisions to define stage-presence, as the basis for its network analysis; a quarter of Lacy titles don't have scene divisions.
- Lacy uses many of the available TEI tags for the front matter of a play ; DraCor largely ignores these.
- DraCor makes no attempt to support metadata such as editorial correction, variant readings, modifications for performance, etc; Lacy should, but doesn't.

> However - the DraCor team is very responsive and helpful !

Tagging headaches are another persistent challenge

These texts are full of phenomena which break or strain the simple OHCO model...

- speaker may be implicit or multiple
- musical numbers (<spGrp>) don't tesselate and may self-nest
- metadata may be missing, uncertain, inconsistent or just wrong

For example ....

Implied speaker

Stand. Its as true as I'm a corporal, so give me a kiss, Mary, and a welcome home.—(*As he kisses her,* Molly *opens the door ; a volley is fired.*)

Enter Molly.

There, now, jontlefolks, ye'd better listen to that music, dears, and give over love making or y'll chance to get a reproof not pleasant to the ears of a soldier.

Stand. Here, dearest Mary, I leave you under the protection of the kindest and the best of friends, my return shall be as speedy as circumstances will permit. I dare uot delay, for I have found some important dispatches on the dead body of a British officer.

```
<sp who="#L1470_M9">
 <speaker>Stand.</speaker>
 <p> Its as true as I'm a corporal, so give me a kiss, Mary, and a welcome home. - (<stage>As
   he kisses her, Molly opens the door; a volley is fired.</stage>)</p>
</sp>
<stage>Enter Molly.</stage>
<sp who="#L1470_F11">
 <p> There, now, jontlefolks, ye'd better listen to that music, dears, and give over love
   making or y'll chance to get a reproof not pleasant to the ears of a soldier.</p>
</sp>
<sp who="#L1470_M9">
 <speaker>Stand.</speaker>
 <p> Here, dearest Mary, I leave you under the protection of the kindest and the best of
   friends, my return shall be as speedy as circumstances will permit. I dare not delay, for I
   have found some important dispatches on the dead body of a British officer.</p>
</sp>
```

Speeches assigned to multiple speakers

PHILIP. (R. C.) *and* ⎱ I hope your honour will not take
KITTY. (R.)   ⎰ away our bread.
LOVEL. (L. C.) Five hundred pounds will set you up in
a chocolate house—you'll shine in the bar, madam. I
have been an eye-witness of your roguery, extravagance,
and ingratitude.
PHILIP *and* ⎱
KITTY.   ⎰ Oh, sir—good sir!

```
<sp who="#L0042R_M3 #L0042R_F7">
 <speaker>Philip. (R.C.) and Kitty. (R.) </speaker>
 <p>I hope your honour will not take away our bread.</p>
</sp>
<sp who="#L0042R_M1">
 <speaker>Lovel.</speaker>
 <p>"Five hundred pounds will set you up in a chocolate house— you'll shine in the bar, madam.
  I have been an eye witness of your roguery, extravagance, and ingratitude.</p>
</sp>
<sp who="#L0042R_M3 #L0042R_F7">
 <speaker>Philip and Kitty.</speaker>
 <p>Oh, sir— good sir!</p>
</sp>
```

(<stage> not currently permitted within <speaker>)

Nesting of simultaneous speech or song

PRINCE. (*advancing to* CINDERELLA) Princess, permit me thus to offer my homage, and attend you. On with the feast.

A PAGE *brings a seat, which is placed next to the throne, on its* R., CINDERELLA *occupies it, the sisters sit on her* R. H., *and the fête continues. A fanciful dance by appropriate characters, followed by a party of Tyrolese singers and dancers, who enter dressed in the costume of their nation. While some dance, the others accompany them by their voices alone.*

TYROLIENNE.

MEN.	WOMEN.
Whilst to joy we sing inviting,	Swift as the flash
With our strains thy steps uniting	That mocks the sight
With thy smiles our pains requiting	Thou seem'st a bird
Lovely maid, our eyes delight.	In airy flight.

TOGETHER. When, home returning,
We leave these cool fountains,
In our native mountains
Thy praise we'll recite.

MEN.	WOMEN.
Fresh flowers	Thy steps so light,
Washed by showers	Our songs invite ;
In Love's bowers,	Come, fairy sprite,
Are less fair and bright.	Our eyes delight.

TOGETHER. When, home returning,
We leave these cool fountains,
In our native mountains
Thy praise we'll recite.

```
<spGrp>
  <head>TYROLIENNE.</head>
  <spGrp org="parallel">
    <sp who="#L0262_MultM">
      <speaker>Men.</speaker>
      <l>Whilst to joy we sing inviting, </l>
        <!-- ... -->
      <l>Lovely maid, our eyes delight.</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#L0262_MultF">
      <speaker>Women.</speaker>
      <l>Swift as the flash </l>
        <!-- ... -->
      <l>In airy flight.</l>
    </sp>
  </spGrp>
  <sp who="#L0262_Mult">
    <speaker>Together.</speaker>
    <l>When, home returning, </l>
      <!-- ... -->
    <l>Thy praise we'll recite.</l>
  </sp>
  <!-- ... -->
</spGrp>
```

The whole dance (the Tyrolienne) is contained by a <spGrp> element which contains two nested <spGrp> elements, each containing two <sp> elements to be performed in parallel. (See also TEI Issue 2695)

Tentative suggestions and conclusions

- TEI conformance is crucial to the interoperability of DraCor corpora. The DraCor profile/ODD should specify which parts of the TEI model are mandatory, desirable, permissible, unsupported ...
- The documentation provided by the DraCor ODD is good, but could be improved: more examples and more discussion of edge cases would be useful ; as would simple tutorial guides showing how to use DraCor-conformant corpora with a variety of tools (not only python, plz)
- Provide a forum for corpus creators to compare methods and tools, and to discuss possible solutions to common encoding problems
- Encourage corpus creators to facilitate gap-filling in DraCor coverage, e.g. ECCO