UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Damsels in Distress: Theatre, Anxiety, and the Feminine from the American Revolutionary War to the Civil War

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Drama

by

Laura Katherine Brost Turner

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Ketu Katrak, Chair

Interim Dean Stephen Barker

Professor Anthony Kubiak

Professor Emily Roxworthy

Associate Professor Jeanne Scheper

2016

DEDICATION

To

my parents, Dale and Patricia, for setting such fine examples,

and

my dearest Todd, for steering the ship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My most heartfelt thanks go out to the legion of professors, classmates, friends, and family whose time, attention, expertise, patience, wisdom, and encouragement assured my present success.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my committee chair, Professor Ketu H. Katrak, with whom I studied throughout my entire time at UCI. I am grateful for her fine assistance in developing this project from its modest beginnings. Her insightful critiques and insistence on clarity improved not only this dissertation but my overall work as a scholar. I promise, Ketu, that someday I will learn to get to the point.

To my committee members, many thanks for your dedication to this project and for the inspiration you provided to me as a student throughout my graduate career. I am grateful to Professor Anthony Kubiak, whose scholarly fearlessness encouraged me to take my own risks, and whose work in the field of American Drama helped prepare the way for my own intervention. Professor Stephen Barker's enthusiastic intellectualism motivated me to always strive for academic alacrity in my work. To Professor Emily Roxworthy I owe all of chapter one, which had its beginnings in her excellent and provocative Representing Mother seminar. My sincerest thanks also go to Professor Jeanne Scheper for serving as the extra-departmental member of this committee. I also thank Professor Scheper for her Gender, Race, and Performance seminar, in which the beginnings of chapter three emerged, and in which she offered a superb model of academic inquiry and rigor. It has been a blessing to work with a committee of this caliber.

In addition, I thank Professor Daphne Lei for her remarkable talent for creating opportunities for students. These opportunities were invaluable to me for both helping me finish this project in the normative time and for preparing me for a career in academia.

I thank the Claire Trevor School of the Arts, especially the Drama department, for supporting me during my time at UCI. I am especially grateful for the Medici Scholarship, which provided the necessary funds for my research trip to the Houghton Theatre Collection at Harvard University.

I would also like to thank the librarians and staff at Langson Library for their assistance over the years. I am especially grateful to Scott Stone for his enthusiasm and his admirable expertise.

My gratitude goes to the librarians and staff of the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Their incredible archival work and professional generosity ensured that the time I spent in their archives was extremely rewarding.

Finally, thank you to all those who have given their support and encouragement along the way. To my fellow students at UCI and UCSD, thank you for your camaraderie and generosity. Special thanks to Guy Zimmerman, Melissa Hill, and Letty Garcia for your ongoing friendship and scholarly support. Special thanks also to Janet Poutre, my biggest cheerleader and best friend during these years. Thank you to Jessica Brost and Michaela Brost for their excellent editorial contributions. To my entire family, I am forever grateful.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Laura Katherine Brost Turner

2006	B.A. in Theatre Arts, Fort Lewis College Summa Cum Laude
2011	M. A. in Theatre History and Criticism, California State University, Northridge Academic Distinction
2011-2014	Artistic Director, President, and Founder, Clairemont Act One Community Theatre, San Diego, CA
2012-2016	Teaching Associate, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California, Irvine
2015-2016	Pedagogical Fellow, Center for Engaged Instruction, University of California, Irvine
2016	PhD. in Drama, University of California, Irvine

FIELDS OF STUDY

American Drama

Gender and Performance

Dramaturgy

World Theatre History

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Damsels in Distress: Theatre, Anxiety, and the Feminine from the American Civil War to the Revolutionary War

By

Laura Katherine Brost Turner

Doctor of Philosophy in Drama

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Profess Ketu H. Katrak, Chair

This dissertation explores the question, "What political, social, and cultural realities influenced the representation of women in American popular dramaturgy from the post-Revolutionary through the antebellum periods?" Drawing on the theories of Silvan Tompkins, Michel Foucault, and Lauren Berlant, among others, I theorize the extent to which affects of distress (the embodied experience of anxiety) inform some of the most frequently reprised tropes of theatrical femininity in the nineteenth century. I argue that racialized tropes of imperiled femininity in the United States' early plays reflected, and acted as an outlet for, the social anxieties particular to the crises surrounding the related issues of gender, race, law, and liberty that characterized the United States in its founding decades. The oft-repeated moments in which theatrical women are placed in danger relate directly to the nation's most pressing socio-political issues, namely the controlling of women through restrictive gender roles, the acquisition of land through the aggressive removal of Native Americans, and the persistence of slavery in the "land of the free." I employ a historiographical approach to the plays in this study, reading them alongside historical events such as landmark court cases, innovations in medicine, and instances of extreme mass violence. I rely on contemporary literature of the periods under review, including slave narratives, advice manuals, and newspaper articles. Finally, I draw greatly on archival research into nineteenth-century theatrical ephemera in order to create a sense of the theatre-going experience, especially when describing moments of spectacle and suspense. The specific tropes of femininity I analyze are the white virgin of Republican-era Gothic plays, the helpful Indian princess trope in Jacksonian Pocahontas dramas, and the mixed-race slave woman of antebellum slavery melodramas. To emphasize their frequency, I analyze three plays in each chapter, providing a brief survey of this dramaturgical phenomenon. I demonstrate the extent to which the racist and misogynist attitudes of patriarchy inform these representations and conclude with the consideration that this legacy still influences the depiction of femininity in American media today.

INTRODUCTION

"Human beings are, at once, the most violent and anxious of animals."

- *Silvan Tompkins,* Shame and its Sisters

In 1802, *Bluebeard; or, Female Curiosity*, adapted by American playwright and theatrical manager William Dunlap, made its American debut at Dunlap's Park Theatre in New York. Although it contains the familiar melodramatic norm of villain-pursuing-innocent maiden, it is important to note that Bluebeard's pursuit of the maiden Fatima, and his many previous wives, is motivated just as much by fear and anxiety of his feminine target as it is by desire for her. Bluebeard has a dark secret that necessitates his acquisition of a wife, a secret which also involves a prophecy that he is doomed by that same wife. The spectacular centerpiece of the play is the Blue Chamber, a subterranean dungeon decorated with the severed heads of Bluebeard's many wives. Curiosity, as the subtitle suggests, is the crime for which Bluebeard executes his wives. Much like the Old Testament God in the Garden of Eden, Bluebeard gives his wives free reign of the castle, providing keys that will allow them unfettered entry into all its many rooms. On the ring of keys, however, is the key to the Blue Chamber, which is also the only room to which they are forbidden to enter. Unfailingly, each of his wives gives in to the urge to know what hides in the Blue Chamber, and each pays the ultimate price for her curiosity. The play begins at the point where Bluebeard is again in search of a wife. The audience watches his new bride, Fatima, face the perils posed not only by the villainous Bluebeard and his Chamber, but also the threat that her own feminine nature poses to herself.

The themes and structure of *Bluebeard* repeat frequently throughout much of nineteenth-century United States popular dramaturgy. The overt story is of a woman placed in peril because

of some masculine malfeasance, and the choices she makes determine whether vice or virtue will prevail. Underlying this plot are also masculine-authored ideologies of femininity which determine how femininity functions in each play and whether women are able to intervene in avoiding or foiling men's bad behavior. The ubiquity of this formula meant that the damsel in distress was everywhere in the nineteenth-century theatre. This is just as true for plays invested in the popular formula of the villain pursuing the virtuous maiden as it was for those plays where this familiar plot is secondary to other themes, as is the case for plays about slavery and western expansionism. In short, women, or fictional idealizations of them, comprised a major focus of nineteenth-century popular dramaturgy.

Given that the nineteenth-century theatre reflected the patriarchal perspective of the United States' social structure in that the majority of the plays were male-authored and that the theatre industry was itself dominated by male management and audiences, it stands to reason that representations of women in dramatic literature and their incarnations in performance might actually tell us more about the male preoccupations of this era than those of its women. I posit that analyzing representations of imperiled women offers intriguing insight into the pervasively androcentric social anxieties informing the United States' first six decades as well as the extent to which the expression of these anxieties through theatrical representations of women normalized the popular expression of femininity in terms of eroticized threat, danger, and uncertainty.

This project is an analysis of the relationship of frequently repeated female character types in the American theatre to anxiety and distress from the United States' Republican era through the antebellum era. I posit that androcentric anxieties specific to inhabiting the contradictory reality of a democratic society founded in exclusionary practices, such as

patriarchy and slavery, and organized in terms of strict and restrictive social binaries designed to enfranchise some and devalue others saturated American society. I argue that the most commonly repeated feminine character types in pre-Civil War American popular theatre functioned as mechanisms by which one can hypothesize how theatre audiences simultaneously resisted and clung to the most urgent of their anxieties. While a wide range of feminized theatrical tropes emerged during this period, I limit my focus to the patterns informing the representation of those tropes characterized by interstitial femininities—the white virgin, the helpful Indian princess, and the mixed-race slave woman. By "interstitial" I mean that these characters' identities place them somewhere between two defined identities. The white virgin, for example, exists somewhere between the defined roles of mother and whore, whereas the helpful Indian princess, often exemplified by Pocahontas, exists in a culturally undefined place between the civilized white settlers whom she helps and her savage Native American birthright that she ultimately rejects. Each of these "damsels in distress" represents sites of anxious investment that worked simultaneously as barometers and outlets for distress. Their analysis in this project helps articulate the multiplicity of complex responses to the struggles associated with living in a democratic society based on principles of inequality and exclusion.

The works of American theatre scholars whose own research draws upon the fraught heterogeneity that characterized nineteenth-century American society influence the present work. For example, Daphne Brooks, in *Bodies in Dissent*, describes the antebellum "spectacular display of racially indeterminate bodies" as at least partially being "an expression of (white) ontological anxiety and theatrical control over representation of the body" (22). Other scholars such as Joseph Roach, Saidiya Hartman, Anthony Kubiak, and Amy E. Hughes also pose social unease and distress as a starting point from which to understand nineteenth-century

representational habits.[1] All of these authors explore the complexity of theatrical representation in a culture segregated by visible markers of difference but whose highly variegated population increasingly defies easy categorization, as prerogatives of action and racial mixing produced hybrid or alternative identities defying easy classification. What my project offers to this conversation is a sustained focus on how femininity circulated in the matrix of anxious national identity formation as both ideological weapon and casualty. The focus on interstitial femininities keeps the study grounded in the investigation of contested identities, a consideration I see as a major determinant informing social relations and their attendant anxieties in the era under review. Further, my project expands the focus of other analyses of theatrical femininity beyond the white/black binary to include that of the Native American. Largely absent from most book-length studies in American theatre since the resurgent interest in the topic in the 1980s, my analysis of Native American femininity opens up the conversation of race to include more than just black/white relations and so also complicates the formation of American identity to include the internal displacement of Native Americans as well as that of the African diaspora.

One of the most overt reasons that American theatre scholars fixate on anxiety as an analytical starting point is that the United States, arguably, began in an age of anxiety. In her recent work *On Anxiety*, Renata Salelcl observes that an age of anxiety often emerges "after some major social crisis," (1) and that this emergence has "also been linked to the traumas that people suffer after society has faced some extreme form of violence" (17). In the post-Revolutionary United States, the "major social crisis" was the severing of ties with the English monarchy in order to create an experimental Republic, an accomplishment achieved via the "extreme…violence" of the Revolutionary War. Additional crises quickly followed victory in

[1] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead*; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Tony Kubiak, *Agitated States*; Amy E. Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform.*

the Revolution, such as the War of 1812 that threatened the United States' newly won independence. In the wake of this seismic socio-political shift, the formerly colonial network of relations now had to reinvent itself in the image of a democratic ideal that did not actually exist except in rhetorical form in such documents as the Declaration of Independence. Salecl notes that this sort of "diffuseness of identity" can contribute "to a particular quest for certainty, which is expressed in 'fundamentalist religious sects and various totalistic spiritual movements'" (5). She elaborates, "it appears that it is the very void, nothingness, that makes us anxious" (16).[2] While phenomena such as the Second Great Awakening point to instances of religious fundamentalism as palliative to post-Revolutionary distress, new Americans' quest for certainty was also necessarily secular, as there existed no formalized system of government. This absence was exacerbated by the jettisoned social hierarchy of the British class system by which individuals could easily classify one another by the social markers of dress and comportment traditionally observed by the British.

In the lacuna of national identity following the Revolutionary War, attempts to stabilize the new society reflected uncertainties as to what kinds of people, *which bodies*, actually comprised the body politic, along with the concomitant concerns regarding which people were outside of the body politic, and which threatened it. It is crucial to note that white, male perspectives dominated the discourse in this vein. For example, in his influential treatise *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson expresses many views which historians consider reflective of his peers. One of these views is the xenophobic reaction to the idea of the influx of immigrants into post-Revolutionary America. Jefferson notes, "The present desire of America is to produce rapid population by as great an importation of foreigners as possible. But is this

[2] This is also Soren Kierkegaard's position in his work *On Anxiety* (1844).

founded on good policy? . . . They will infuse into it [the law] their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass" (Jefferson 83-85). The tone of Jefferson's concerns reflects the tension existing between inside/outside, domestic/foreign, and order/disorder binaries that permeate a great deal of discourse in Jefferson's era and beyond. From America's first decades as a nation, the question of who was "American" and who was "not American" informed all aspects of the United States' development. As the amorphous status of just what "American" might mean was itself uncertain in the wake of the Revolution, attempts to concretely articulate who and what the term described were themselves necessarily troubled, fostering a manic rush to fill the void of signification with definitive pronouncements, laws, documents, and social practices. Significantly, rather than slowing down, efforts to definitely define the identity "American" multiplied as the decades progressed.

The complexity of the concept of anxiety and the many studies done on the topic led me to consult a variety of sources and synthesize my own understanding of anxiety. Most influential to my efforts to formulate a theory of anxiety as it operated in the early United States are Silvan Tompkins, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, and Soren Kierkegaard. Equally complimentary and contradictory, each theorists' articulations are at work in my invocations of such terms as "anxiety" and "distress." While I have used the terms "anxiety" and "distress" interchangeably in the above pages, it is important to address what I understand to be the essential differences between the terms and to explain their particular connotations in this text.

I utilize the term "anxiety" to designate the ontological starting point of the human condition, whereas by "distress" I mean the somato-psychic condition through which individuals express various forms and levels of anxiety. Essentially, this is the difference between anxiety as

a *state of being* and distress as *the lived experience of that state*. The concept of anxiety as an ontological starting point is present in many major theorists' writings on the subject. The common thread uniting them all is the understanding of anxiety as a response to nothingness. Lacan expresses this nothingness as the lack of recognition that occurs when one enters the symbolic realm which, through its dependence on language, destabilizes the formerly unified self of the mirror stage (Lacan 105). While Lacan expresses this experience of nothingness negatively through lack, Kierkegaard, in his work *On Anxiety*, for example, articulates it positively as the possibility for self-actualization through choice. This is due to Kierkegaard's assumption of free will, with anxiety being the resultant condition of one being equally capable of choosing any available option. The indeterminate nature of free choice, the always already possibility of any possibility, *is* the state of anxiety. Gregory Beabout, in his book on Kierkegaard's theories, explains: "When the term 'anxiety' is used in this ontological sense, it means that one's relation to the future is one of freedom, since no one future possibility is a necessity. Therefore, the term 'anxiety' refers to an ontological structure of human beings, specifically one's free relation to the future" (Beabout 48). Although different in their determinations, Lacan and Kierkegaard both essentially agree that "anxiety" is the relational state between human beings and themselves and others in which nothing is absolute or fixed. Following from these and other understandings, "anxiety" designates the standard medium of the ambiguous relations between a subject and his or her environment. In other words, "anxiety" connotes the abstract experience of ambiguity and expectation.

As I am concerned with individuals' lived experience of this ambiguity and how it affects cultural activity, I tend to avoid this less concrete term "anxiety" in favor of Silvan Tomkins' term "distress." As Tomkins uses it, "distress" refers to the quotidian experience of anxiety, the

uncomfortable but not disabling state of anticipation or tension created by ambiguity that manifests physically as muscle strain and which motivates one to seek its relief or masking. Tomkins chooses the term "distress" over "anxiety" because he feels that overuse has robbed the word "anxiety" of any kind of precision. He notes "Like all concepts which 'succeed' and are taken into too many bosoms, anxiety has become a weasel word, meaning all things to all men" (236). The variety of definitions of the term in *Merriam-Webster's* dictionary are a testament to this attenuation.[3] Tomkins suggests that the intense fear usually connoted by the term "anxiety" is actually more akin to terror, a paralyzing affect that encourages avoidance rather than engagement (236). Distress, alternately, is not limited to the experience of fear or pain as terror is, and generally, because of the supreme discomfort and unease it can produce, motivates action geared towards its relief or masking. Tomkins asserts, "Any action which is contemplated or intended but which is inhibited for any reason can … produce sufficient increase in peripheral muscle tonus to activate distress." He continues, "It is a lack of equilibrium that causes sustained tension" (114). In this articulation, the over-stimulation related to the obsessive brooding over an impending confrontation or, conversely, the manic expectation of a future pleasure, can both induce distress. In my project, the threat or actual practice of exclusion from social goods is also a source of distress. The experiences which incite this affective mode are themselves "distressing," as those who are subject to it are "distressed." Unlike anxiety as articulated above, distress is specific to circumstances rather than ontological, and thus the mechanisms for coping with it will be circumstantial as well. In my project, theatre-going and the plays informing that

[3] *Merriam-Webster's* offers the following definitions of "anxiety" that equate the abstract with the concrete experience of it: 1a. a painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind usually over an impending or anticipated ill; 1b. Fearful concern or interest; 1c. A cause of anxiety. 2. an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it.

experience are the mechanisms under discussion. Plays and other performances, being highly subjective, are necessarily interpreted through a multitude of contexts and contingencies. It is possible, then, that the emphasis on interstitial femininity I identify in some nineteenth-century theatrical genres arose as a mechanism for coping with the particular feelings of distress circulating in the United States' founding decades. At times, I argue, theatrical representation can function as a palliative to distress, while at other times it induces distress. Where and how this circulating network of distress literally "plays out" in representations of the interstitial feminine is a core concern of my project.

Finally, "distress" was also chosen for its connection to danger. Distress and danger share a reciprocal relationship, where distress is both a result of and response to expected danger. This complicates Tomkins' definition of distress as the response to "the lack of equilibrium that causes sustained tension," adding to it feelings of threat and personal peril. The cliché "damsels in distress" was coined to refer to women in threatening circumstances who are in need of masculine rescue (Hughes 95). What my research shows is that many of the most commonly represented interstitial femininities are "damsels in distress" but, through their own agency, nearly always rescue themselves from danger. Imperiled women, that is, women in dangerous situations, appear repeatedly in nineteenth-century plays. The surprising number of them that elude danger without significant masculine intervention suggests that not all expressions of distress found in distressed women are fantasies of masculine heroism. This will be useful when considering how interstitial femininities are both reflections and causes of distress.

In sum, I privilege the word "distress" rather than "anxiety" in my project to refer to the lived experience of the atmosphere of unease that I argue permeated at least the first century or so of the United States' history. At times I oscillate between terms for the sake of variety or

when the context requires it. However, my focus on theatre and experiences inherent in reception make "distress" a more appropriate term and so accounts for its ubiquitous use throughout.

States of Distress: Uneasy Affects in the New Nation

i. The Scene of Distress

"The highest joy wealth brings to Adeline
Is that she can restore you to the world,
And bear a testimony, none shall doubt,
Of innate worth, and blest, repentant virtue."

- *Adeline,* Fontainville Abbey *by William Dunlap*

Following the Revolutionary War, and present in much discourse throughout the nineteenth century, political and religious leaders often spoke about ideal American citizens and practices in terms of the order/disorder binary. When one considers the post-Revolutionary milieu, it is not difficult to understand how order/disorder initially dominated society's first articulations of the constituent terms of the American/not American quandary. The nineteenth century's social, cultural, and political transformations posed a particular challenge to Anglo citizens of the United States, who, fresh from the Revolutionary struggle with England, "would have to shape diverse elements, different religions, and enormous geographical spaces into a new nation that could remain politically free and become economically prosperous" (Heidler and Heidler 1). One determining factor of how post-Revolutionary society viewed its problems and their possible solutions was the prevalence of Enlightenment thought.

Although always contested by Romanticism's influence in the United States, the tenets of the Enlightenment strongly impacted the worldview of nascent America's legal and moral authorities. At least three major tenets held sway. The first of these was a mechanistic understanding of the order of nature as possessing an intrinsic order of innate regularities (Tarnas 285). In other words, nature was a self-regulated system with its own inviolable and invariable logic. A second influential notion was the confirmation of that natural order by empirical observations made possible by man's rational mind, which in itself was connected to an increased valuation of the verifiability of reality in terms of observable phenomena (286).[4] In other words, appearances and signs of affiliation dominated systems of organization, whether scientific or social. (This is one reason why the disappearance of the sartorial organization of the British class system was so distressing to many Americans.) Third, discourses on America's national character shared the Enlightenment assumption that man's rational status simultaneously placed him outside of nature and defined his relationship to the physical world as one of mastery. According to Richard Tarnas in his book *The Passion of the Western Mind*, "The rationally empowered capacity to manipulate impersonal forces and material objects in nature became the paradigm of the human relationship to the world" (287). This rationale encouraged the idealization of the civilizing process, while also motivating the classification of non-white races not participating in development of the land as less than human (I elaborate on this in chapters two and three).

Other legacies from the Enlightenment were more legacies of habit than tenets. A major aspect of the Enlightenment is its emphasis on categorization of the known world. The assumption is that by classifying and ordering the phenomena of the world, man can understand

[4] The use of "man's" rather than man- or humankind is intentional here, as the possession of a rational mind was, in the nineteenth century at least, a thoroughly gendered concept.

and thus more aptly act as steward to the world (i.e., exercise his mastery). This point of view also assumes that everything *can* be categorized, because it has knowable characteristics consistent with similar subjects or objects. Things or people that cannot be categorized are not able to be analyzed through a lens of rationality and thus, in the Enlightenment view, disrupt human progress as attained through understanding. The value placed on classifiable characteristics explains the negative value connoted by such terms as "monstrous," most often applied to things, people, or actions that exceeded the limits of known categories. "Monstrous" was frequently employed, for example, to describe villains in melodramas, whose actions placed them outside the popular moral order. The mixed-race slave woman Zoe even uses the epithet to describe herself in *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana* (see chapter three). Understanding, knowing, ordering—all of these impulses, in the Enlightenment frame, involve the teleology of creating civilized order out of social chaos. This impulse informs the Enlightenment habit of organizing objects and ideas into ostensibly complementary binary sets. Importantly, although largely formulated to combat the secularism of the Enlightenment, Christian revivalist movements also encouraged organizing the world through binary categories (see especially chapter one for more on such movements as the Great Awakening and its influence). Together, Enlightenment thinking and Christian revivalism represent the two most influential strains of thought and beliefs at work in early American society. I will expand more on and contend with the nature of these binaries below.

First, however, I discuss the relationship between two of the most fraught binaries at work in post-Revolutionary America—American/not American, and order/disorder. While discourses of national identity effected all inhabitants of the United States, the nation's urban centers served as the epicenter of that discourse. The cities' dense and heterogeneous

populations provided a veritable buffet of different social positions and lifestyles from and against which social, legal, and moral leaders attempted to discursively craft examples of ideal Americans. I say "craft" rather than some more passive verb such as "choose" or "describe" to emphasize the actively constructed nature of discourses on national character. Political speeches, church sermons, conduct manuals, newspaper editorials—all of these discursive media wrote in proscriptive rather than descriptive terms, actively formulating ideal characteristics which were then rhetorically imposed on, rather than merely descriptive of, the collective mass of urban residents. These ideals existed in conflict with, and in large part as a response to, the empirical reality of the urban milieu. From the perspective of a philosophical position which equated observable signs of order (discernible racial identity, cleanliness, etc.) with structural order, the disorganization of the urban centers undermined the formula for a thriving free society. Marcia Carlisle conveys this in her description of post-war Philadelphia: "Until the mid-nineteenth century, the wards of Philadelphia were a disorderly mixture of the rich, middling and poor; of native and immigrant; of black and white. Amidst the rush of growth and change, there was little room for privacy, no premium on decorum . . ." (Carlisle 549). Carlisle's observation that when prostitutes were arrested, they were charged not with prostitution (which as an activity was not made illegal until the twentieth century), but with being *disorderly*, illustrates the potentially distressing nature of urban disorder (568). Sexual promiscuity and wage-earning were both coded as male characteristics, meaning that women demonstrating these same prerogatives violated the social organization of the male/female binary.

Carlisle notes, however, that the disordered character was eventually at least partially remedied through formalized social expectations: "The modern city was to bring with it more rigid rules of behavior and formal standards that set groups off from each other . . . The

reshaping of the old city was as much a reshaping of the people who lived in it as it was a recasting of the urban horizon" (Carlisle 549). What Carlisle refers to here is the influx of reform movements that comprised the white, middle-class response to perceptions of urban disorder and which dominated the Jacksonian and antebellum eras. Targets of reform movements were those individuals or social practices which most threatened social or moral "order," namely prostitutes, drunkards, and immoral entertainments. Christopher Castiglia argues that reform movements had less to do with the targets of reform than the reformers themselves; battling their own interior impulses that seemed in conflict with national ideals, they attempted to craft their external environments to reflect the order and discipline they could not achieve within themselves. Castiglia describes this as the "nervous state," which he defines as "the increasingly discordant human interior . . . with its battles between appetite and restraint, desire and deferral, consciousness and unconsciousness," which he claims became "a microcosm of the equally riven sociality of nineteenth-century America" (2). Castiglia's "nervous state" resembles Freud's revised theory of anxiety in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, where Freud presents anxiety as the repression of physical responses to an expected danger, namely the danger of violating a prohibition. Salecl explains that in this formulation, "Anxiety becomes taken as an affect, a *bodily excitation*, which the subject has difficulties dealing with. Often, the subject develops various inhibitions or symptoms as a process of defense against this feeling of anxiety" (20) (emphasis added).[5] Anxiety here is a physical discomfort provoked by a threatening context which the subject seeks to mask or relive through sublimation. In the case of white, middle-class urban reform, reformers sublimated their own unease with their ostensibly

[5] Freud's formulation of anxiety as described here by Salecl closely resembles what I understand Tomkins to mean by "distress."

anti-social desires (their own disorders) through a cycle of recrimination and rehabilitation directed at anti-social (disorderly) "others."

Following the Revolution, the economy was just as chaotic as city life. The uncertainty of the young American economy, especially once investment banking was introduced alongside the developing industrial economy, exacerbated the feeling of chaos experienced in the disorganized urban milieu. The Revolutionary War left the new American Republic in a state of near bankruptcy at both the federal and state level (Heidler and Heidler 20). Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton achieved an uneasy stability with his decision that the federal government assume the states' debts and that it establish the Bank of the United States, in which investors could buy shares. This stability, however, did not result in a dependable nationwide currency, nor did it ensure the success of smaller local banks. Added to this was the boom and bust cycle of investments, epitomized by the crash of 1819 which, along with the debts acquired in the War of 1812, prompted the closing of the Bank of the United States and initiated the country's first real economic depression since the Revolutionary War (Heidler and Heidler 90-93).

The United States' erratically fluctuating financial realities affected more than just the bottom line; it also took a psychological toll. According to sociologist G. J. Barker-Benfield, "Since America was regarded as the most advanced country, doctors found there the highest incidence of insanity: conditions thought to derange the mind were the unchecked nature of democratic ambitions; a lifetime's enervation by perplexing choice; and the chronic uncertainty of the modern economy" ("Spermatic" 376). The very lifestyle pursued by white, male urbanites, then, had the disordering of the mind as a structural component, with the pursuit of wealth tied directly to this tendency. George C. Foster's observations of Wall Street in his *New*

York by Gas-Light and Other Urban Sketches, published in 1856, gives an eye-witness account of the mental toll of the open market and its distressing side-effects:

> [T]hrough this gasping atmosphere, hurry, with silent, shuffling steps, throngs of men, old, young, well dressed and untidy, fat, lean, tall, short—all different, yet alike, with *that expression of uniform anxiety* . . . Would not a rational being, stationed here for the first time, and knowing nothing of the great game of money-making which absorbs the faculties of the present age—would he not conclude that some gigantic lunatic asylum had been let loose, and that its inmates were rushing about in disgust with their newly-found freedom, trying to find their quiet and somber cells again? (Foster 221) (emphasis added)

The semantic choices in this description set up a clear dichotomy between the neurotic participants and the rational outsider. Although published in 1856, and thus situated more firmly within what is known as the antebellum era rather than the immediate post-Revolutionary era, the experience Foster describes is but a later and more pronounced incarnation of the same pressures and distress experienced by urban men in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Foster's account and the medical acceptance of insanity-by-capital asserted by Barker-Benfield allude to a dynamic that ought to have been at odds with the order/disorder binary employed to regulate all other areas of social life. Ideal masculinity (read Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual and middle class), however, was believed capable of coping with the chaos of the economic world by virtue of its claim to superior rationality. According to Barker-Benfield:

> The circumstances that drove *men* to insanity were assumed to be givens of their society and of their sexual role within it. The characteristic disorder of boom and slump was, as Tocqueville put it, an "endemic disease" of the democratic

> "temperament." The corollary of accepting such conclusions about men was to direct social/medical/psychological expertise in that area of society that was not held by men to be so inalienable as the nature of their own existences, and, consequently was controllable; that is, to direct it at women. And a step beyond that was to concentrate on that part of woman that made her especially liable to insanity, her sexual organs. (Barker-Benfield "Spermatic" 382)

From this understanding, then, the insanity prompted by economic pressures was actually part of the rightful order of things, part of man's natural lot, the pressures of which were somehow at least partially relieved by pathologizing women's reproductive selves. As Barker-Benfield explains it, this ordered masculine disorder was ostensibly balanced by the circumscribing of women into their own sphere. I expand Barker-Benfield's argument by, first, acknowledging that by "women" he actually means *white* women, and, secondly, by asserting that it was not only white women who were the target of men's "social/medical/psychological expertise." I argue that the racial hierarchy, as it developed throughout the nineteenth-century, can also be directly related to distress over perceived social disorder. This is an important consideration in this project, as the representation of the Native American and black interstitial femininities, analyzed in chapters two and three respectively, cannot be separated from the dominant androcentric understandings of racial identities informing them. Their status as female subject them to a sort of double-othering, in which both racial identity and gender set them apart from white masculinity. Whether directed at white women or men and women of other races, however, what remains consistent is the tendency for mainstream masculine society to relieve the distress endemic to its very way of life by projecting idealized (or, as the case may be, pathologized) identities onto social Others. How this game of distress and dominance plays out

within the particular framework of binary thinking underlying American society is the subject of the following section.

ii. Distressed Binaries

The constellation of discourse in this era reveals that many social and political leaders sought to alleviate their distress at the apparent disorder and ambiguous character of the new nation by employing even more binaries in an attempt to organize and demarcate the populace along (primarily visible) lines of inclusion and exclusion. Rather than alleviating distress, however, the restrictive nature of these binaries and the ways they contradicted popular Democratic ideals of equality created even more widespread distress. My dissertation focuses specifically on representations of feminine characters who act as possible exceptions to some of the nineteenth-century's most central binaries, complicating the binary's apparent simplicity. The impact of these characters cannot be fully understood without first elucidating not only the centrality of binaries to American thinking, but the inherent pitfalls in them which make adhering to them problematic and distressing.

It is my assertion that one cannot underestimate the influence of binary thinking in the development of ideal American identity. The organizing structure of the binary was (and perhaps in some ways still is) a significant discursive strategy employed to both define the idealized American citizen and justify systemic exclusion. Literature, theatrical performance, historical documents, legal decisions, moral pamphlets, religious tracts, medical texts, treatises on education—all of these reveal a social dependence on a few binary terms at work in the Western mind at least since the Renaissance but reified to the extreme in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. These binaries include: order/disorder, white/black, man/woman, civilized/savage, free/slave, native/immigrant, and foreign/domestic, all of which were included in the American/not American dyad. Other binaries were certainly in circulation, and many of these binaries (such as man/woman) hold within them other binaries that determine their characteristics, such as rational/irrational in the case of man/woman. Even though the assumed pattern of binary pairs is A/B, denoting that the terms were opposites, all of these binaries were read (consciously or unconsciously) through an A/not A pattern (more on this below). Given this, one's inclusion in term A of any of the binary pairs listed above granted one access to all the rights and liberties guaranteed by the constitution (i.e., guaranteed to true Americans, the ultimate A term). In this formulation, who would ever want to identify with the B (or "not A") term in any of these dyads, given its secondary and inferior status? And what if one belonged to the superior term in one binary but the inferior term in another (if one was a white woman, for example, or a black man)? The resultant distress of possible exclusion from rights that, if possessed, demarcated one's national belonging are a direct result of a strict adherence to the exclusionary nature of binary thinking.

American cultures' basis in binary thought operated as a power structure that foregrounded the body as a primary social marker. Foucault's concept of political anatomy is useful here, as it connects systems of bodily distribution to the emphasis placed on observation, surveillance, and visible markers of social rank and personal identity in a binary-driven culture. Foucault notes:

> Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes. Thanks to the techniques of

> surveillance, the 'physics' of power, the hold over the body, operate according to the laws of optics and mechanics, according to a whole play of spaces, lines, screens, beams, degrees and without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force or violence. It is a power that seems all the less "corporal" in that it is more subtly "physical." (Foucault, *Discipline* 177)

Post-Revolutionary American society organized its multiplicity according to visible categories of difference that were in turn associated with hierarchies of social belonging, behavioral expectations, and personal worth as expressed through dominant binaries. As Foucault implies in his concept of normative judgment and critics such as Daphne Brooks articulate more fully in their work, this economy of visible difference resulted in what I describe as a "boundary culture," a complex system of social limits that treated identity as knowable through a body's visible identity markers and its location in geographic or social space. In the United States during the era under consideration, boundary lines were treated as natural (read, given or *a priori*) and impermeable, thus making their transgression highly taboo and dangerous. For example, Francis Connelly recognizes the distress informing the reproduction of grotesque paintings of prostitutes as "hysteria concerning women *out of place*" in nineteenth-century culture (136) (emphasis added). A boundary culture is thus one preoccupied with the maintenance of boundaries and the distress over their inevitable transgression in a heterogeneous society. Binary thinking provided the framework for this kind of culture to emerge.

Binary relationships, from the Enlightenment point of view, were productive in their mutual contingency. Order, for example, was assumed to have no meaning outside of its relationship to disorder. Disorder is that which gives order its value and makes it legible. Using binary terms of opposition to represent natural composites made of complementary parts is

persuasive for its neatness (its orderliness). However conceptually neat binaries may make the world appear, they are nonetheless problematic for a host of reasons. First and foremost, while binaries assume a complementary relationship between two distinct terms, their expression in American society was one of exclusion through hierarchical valuation. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in her compelling analysis of binaries in *Epistemology of the Closet*, notes that "categories presented in a culture as symmetrical binary oppositions . . . actually subsist in a more unsettled and dynamic tacit relation according to which . . . term B is not symmetrical with but subordinated to term A. . ." (9-10). In other words, term A of the binary set holds superior social significance to term B, evident over the preference for order (term A) over disorder (term B) in the order/disorder binary. Privileging the establishment of order over disorder implies the natural inequality of the two terms in reference to social desirability. Term A's superior social value is at least partially related to the fact that term A is not term B. The assumed semantic formulation of binaries that were also organized hierarchically was, then, effectively A/not A rather than A/B. This is significant in a democracy whose overriding binary relationship was American/not American.

A second problematic aspect of binaries is their assumed stability. The dependent relationship between terms, however, ultimately renders them unstable. Sedgwick explains: "the ontologically valorized term A actually depends for its meaning on the simultaneous subsumption and exclusion of term B; hence . . . the question of priority between the *supposed* central and the *supposed* marginal category of each dyad is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is constituted as at once internal and external to term A" (10) (emphasis added). In this understanding, the A/not A formula breaks down, because term A depends in some way on term B. This means that, in some ways, terms A and B can never be

fully discrete because they are both dependent on each other for their content, if only in trace amounts. In this sense, the binary A/B represents a *range* of meanings rather than just two.

Satisfying as it is to illustrate the fallibility of binaries, Sedgwick warns us that "To understand these conceptual relations as irresolvably unstable is not . . . to understand them as inefficacious or innocuous" (10). Indeed, this entire project relies on the premise that binaries in nineteenth-century America were promulgated as though they represented stable hierarchies between discrete terms. If binaries were understood to be *un*stable, then evidence of violation of the absolute values of the terms would present no dilemmas. My assertion is that the hegemonic commitment to the absolute nature of a particular collection of binaries and the distress caused by evidence of their fallibility predicated the atmosphere of distress under investigation in this project. The assumed hierarchy within a binary relationship depends on the discreteness of the terms, in their inability to commingle and create a third term. The reality of binary instability, however, is reflected by the persistent presence of third-terms. A third-term, as I use it in my project, is something not classifiable as one or the other, neither "A" nor "not A," but both "A" *and* "not A." The article "and" introduces the potential for infinite "and"s. In the nineteenth century, this possibility posed a crisis of categorization, a descent into the unknown, which is the breeding ground of distress. The chapters in this dissertation consider feminine tropes representing third-terms of dominant binaries, also called "interstitial femininities," and consider how the compulsive repetition of these tropes functioned as means to negotiate the various degrees of distress related to and informing their incarnations.

iii. Distress, Desire, and the Third-Term

"The 'third' is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge"

- *Marjorie Garber,* Vested Interests

In the above section, I introduced the idea of the United States as a "boundary culture," one dependent on the absolute nature of social boundaries dependent on visible classification but also wary of the potential permeability of those boundaries. I now consider the implications of third-terms in such a bounded society, and in so doing create the context within which the following chapters analyze the interstitial theatrical figures of the white virgin, the helpful Indian princess, and the mixed-race slave woman. As Marjorie Garber argues in her introduction to *Vested Interests,* "The 'third' is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis . . ." (11). The "crisis" to which Garber refers is specifically "category crisis," a term she uses to describe "a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another" (16). While the term "crisis" might connote a troubling event, the conflict introduced by third-terms, as the epigraph to this section suggests, is in fact productive as well as transgressive (Garber 16). The "third" suggests that multiplicity cannot be subsumed into the neat unity of complementarity suggested by the dyad; this consideration has far-reaching implications for a nation whose motto is *e pluribus unum* (out of the many, one).

If one's identity allows one to participate in the superior term of a binary, one is likely to want to maintain that affiliation. Conversely, if one's identity places one in an inferior or external relationship to the superior term, one is likely to want to either alter their identity to more closely resemble the superior term or look for ways to destroy the authority of the binary. This is because the A term, at least in the American/not American binary, allows access to the independence, financial opportunities, and global prestige increasingly associated with

"American" as the nineteenth century progressed. The term "American" is shorthand for the promises of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," the latter being acquired by means of wealth accumulation. Lauren Berlant connects ideological or emotional promises to the concept of desire in her article "Cruel Optimism":

> When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us. This cluster of promises could be embedded in a person, a thing, an institution, a text, a norm, a bunch of cells, smells, a good idea—whatever. To phrase the 'object of desire' as a cluster of promises is to allow us to encounter what is incoherent or enigmatic in our attachments, not as confirmation of our irrationality, but as an explanation for our sense of *our endurance in the object,* insofar as proximity to the object means proximity to the cluster of things that the object promises, some of which may be clear to us while others not so much. (Berlant, "Cruel" 20) (original emphasis)

It is possible that American society's relationship to binaries can be understood in terms of this formulation of desire as an affective connection to "cluster[s] of promises." The theatrical examples under consideration, namely feminine third-terms who disrupted America's most prevalent binaries in the nineteenth century, reflect the ambivalent relationship theatre artists and audiences had to the "cluster[s] of promises" inherent in ideal American identity. The frequent repetition of particular dramatic characters is an example of "endurance in the object" of desire, experienced through the proximity of live performance and imagined within the context of the goods and values "promised" by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. What is desired is not necessarily the "woman" on stage nor her body *per se*, but

instead the relationship of all the ideologies affecting the representation of that body to the deep yearning for belonging that is promised in the moniker "American" yet denied to many in -+practice. That this attachment to the cluster of democratic promises pervading early American culture is also nearly always eroticized speaks to the primal and personal nature of spectatorial attachment to these figures.

Theatre, National Identity, and the Spectacle of the Third Term

In *Theatre, Society, and the Nation: Staging American Identities,* S. E. Wilmer states "The theatre can serve as a microcosm of the national community passing judgment on images of itself" (2). This was certainly the case in the post-Revolutionary United States. One of the first sites in which American citizens negotiated their understanding of the discourse embodied in the American/not American binary was the newly legalized theatrical economy.[6] The theatre, as a place of fantasy and impermanence, can be the ideal venue within which to give voice to new ideas and interrogate or reinforce old ones. In the case of United States culture, much energy was devoted to deciding which new ideas were most in line with emerging American values and which old ideas should be retained.

Theatre was a precarious business in the early Republic. Especially in Northern centers, the Puritan work ethic held sway, and "many employers believed that leisure bred vice and laziness" (Heidler and Heidler 106). The Second Great Awakening early in the nineteenth century reinforced these attitudes toward entertainment, especially among rural populations

[6] According to M. Susan Anthony, "By the 1790s . . . major cities that had antitheatrical laws on their books began to repeal them . . . . In 1792, Charleston repealed its Vagrancy Act of 1787 which had prohibited theatricals; in 1793 the Charleston Theatre opened. In 1793 Boston repealed its Act of 1750 which had prohibited theatrical entertainment; in 1794 the Federal Street Theatre opened. New York's Park Street Theatre opened in 1798" (16).

(106). A large segment of society, however, believed in self-improvement, and the idea that leisure time could be used to this end became widely accepted in the Republican era (111-112). Those seeking entertainment were most likely to patronize those events which encouraged familiar moral and political beliefs and avoided any stamp of impropriety. Theatre managers were sensitive to this and so avoided presenting plays which challenged popular morality (except, of course, on those rare occasions when such productions were demanded by the public). Controversial plays could attract undue attention to a theatre by exposing it to censorious remarks and seriously endangering its box office receipts. William Dunlap, manager of New York's Park Theatre from its opening in 1798, experienced this first hand when he presented his play *André,* in which he attempts to portray an American traitor during the Revolutionary War in a sympathetic light. The violence of the audience's condemnation of this perceived affront to American nationalism caused him to promptly rescind the play and motivated his authoring of a patriotic play for that year's 4th of July celebration (Wilmer 12). *André* challenged the audience's strongly formed opinions about what treachery meant in terms of the American/not American binary. Dunlap's attempt to portray a sympathetic traitor was clearly not sympathetic to enough people to gain much traction in contradicting the binary in which it worked.

Given the importance of theatre to the first half of the nineteenth century, my project attempts to keep the embodied experience of attending theatre at the forefront in order to fully consider how the effect of distress functioned in and through the theatre of this era. Theatre historian M. Susan Anthony notes, "In the years following the American Revolution, citizens in the newly formed United States wrestled with questions of equality, cultural dependence, and many of these tensions were played out in the theatres" (16). Anthony's assertion resembles a

commonplace observation of American theatre history scholars. What Anthony does not convey, however, is any sense of how *the physical environment* of the theatre contributed to this function. In the summer of 2015, I embarked on a research trip to the Harvard Theatre Collection with the goal of developing a sense of what the live theatrical experience may have really felt like for its audiences. I was fortunate to find many documents and images that allowed me to more fully understand the experience. Through these documents I uncovered the importance of the cavernous size of the theatres to the spectatorial experience. In the 19th century, especially from the 1830s onward, theatres featured huge houses where thousands gathered nightly. Figure 0.1, an undated engraving of a performance at New York's Park Theatre, gives a sense of the immense size of the theatrical spaces. Figure 0.2 (a close-up of Figure 2.1 in chapter 2), demonstrates that spectators interacted with one another during the performances. One can imagine the buzz of conversation generated by so many thousands of spectators and the sensation of sharing performance events with such a large group.

Figure 0.1 The Park Theatre This image illustrates a performance at New York's Park Theatre published in the article "Old Theatres of New York" (n.d.). From the Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Besides accommodating a large number of spectators, the enormous theatres, with their deep proscenium stages and high ceilings, also had the room necessary to house machinery for generating spectacular effects. Moments of spectacle, as Amy E. Hughes argues in her recent book *Spectacles of Reform*, "were not only exemplars of crowd-pleasing stagecraft but also complex experiences with the potential to transform humans in the audience through the human figures on stage" (4). Part of the transformation Hughes alludes to, I argue, occurred because thousands of audience members experienced breath-taking moments of spectacle simultaneously. One can imagine the collective gasp emitted by the crowd as heroes and heroines battled for their lives against dastardly villains and the sense of shared relief that accompanied the inevitable happy ending. The affective impact of spectacle, as Hughes asserts, "had legs, working in tandem with visual and material culture to convey, allay, and deny urgent concerns about the rights and responsibilities of U. S. citizenship" (Hughes 5). Theatre buildings in the nineteenth century were specifically designed to accommodate huge audiences and their equally huge appetite for sumptuous moments of climactic spectacle.

Figure 0.2 Bowery Audience 1856 This illustration depicts a performance at the Bowery Theatre in New York in 1856. The many spectators have a reciprocal involvement with the play, as they simultaneously watch, react to, and comment on the onstage action.

Spectacle is a central concern of my analysis because the moments of imperiled femininity I examine are themselves defined in and through spectacular moments of danger. In her commentary on Freud's thoughts on anxiety, Salecl notes, "anxiety primarily has to do with expectation of a danger," by which she specifically means the danger of a loss or lack of a subject (19). Tomkins explains distress in terms of expectation as well, although he clarifies that distress can occur equally in the expectation of danger as in the expectation of pleasure—too much of either sustains the overstimulation of muscles that induces distress. The spectacle of women under threat, which is the plot-device of nearly every play analyzed in my project, means that the expectation of danger that precipitates distress is at the formal heart of much nineteenth-century dramaturgy. Salecl goes on to explain that danger, and the anxiety it provokes, is often mediated through fantasy: "One way neurotics deal with their anxiety is by creating a fantasy.

Fantasy is a way for the subject to cover up a lack by creating a scenario, a story that gives him or her consistency" (Salecl 23). From this perspective, fantasy is palliative. I argue that the damsel's distress is purposefully (albeit perhaps unconsciously) dramatized as a response to larger masculine social distress, a symbolic figuration of that distress, and as a form of temporary relief from that distress. Tomkins recommends that individuals experiencing muscular tension associated with distress find ways to allay it. I argue that in addition to providing a space for palliative fantasy, theatre-going in the early nineteenth century was conducive also to the release of physical stress through the fantastic. As Washington Irving and other contemporary observers have noted, the theatrical milieu was a place of raucous behavior, with patrons of all classes "letting go" a bit (Irving 40-44). Richard Butsch comments that audience members could directly influence the course of an evening, demanding actors repeat favorite scenes or denouncing a play entirely and demanding its cessation (379-383). The interactive, physical aspect of theatre was part of its definition in this era. Aside from direct input through boos, hisses, and projectile objects, the spectacle of the drama was also physically interactive, as it heightened the affective atmosphere of the theatre and served to intensify the already intense or dangerous moments in the plays.

Much nineteenth-century moments of spectacle centered on interstitial subjectivities. Which of these were most prevalent in a given time and the conventions connected to their representation are context-specific, shifting in response to social preoccupations and political controversies. Brooks, for example, asserts that pre-Civil War culture agonized over the transgression of boundaries between bodies as a direct reflection of the polarization over emancipation and the concomitant anxiety surrounding the presence of free black people in society. Brooks describes antebellum society as "a culture obsessed with the porosity and

excesses of the corporeal and intrigued by the spectacle of encounter and contact in and across the fictions of the body" (Brook 22). The "spectacles of encounter" Brooks describes often focused on the competing sensations of distress and pleasure that accompanied transformation, reflected in what she terms the "racial phantasmagoria" of bodies present in the pantomime shows, melodramas, and minstrel shows of the era (21). Third-term characters are themselves encounters with the limits of the binary to fully contain meaning and circumscribe identity. My project is interested in those most consistently repeated theatrical third-terms, the "spectacles of encounter" they reify, and the degree to which their interstitial identities relieve, mask, or exacerbate the symptoms of social distress from which they spring.

Chapter Summaries

The theatrical examples of third-terms that I study in this project are connected to the most contentious and/or deeply contradictory social policies affecting United States society between the end of the Revolutionary War and the start of the Civil War—namely misogyny, westward expansionism, and slavery. This period was an era in which public leaders and private citizens alike first participated in the reification of difference inherent in democracy as it was practiced in the United States. In many ways the Civil War was the inevitable outcome of the magnification of tensions entailed in the inconsistent application of democratic freedoms. In other words, the progression from the late 1780s to the 1860s saw gradually increasing levels of social distress resulting from attempts to normalize inequality. This distress affected all inhabitants regardless of whether one created inequitable policies or was merely subject to them. The examples of interstitial femininity I analyze in the following chapters reflect the effects of

prolonged exposure to inequality. Their third-term status directly influences the dramaturgical traditions in which they appear. As I discussed at the beginning of this introduction, women are everywhere in the popular drama of the nineteenth-century United States. The female figures I focus on in this work, while differing in racial identity and political significance, share three common features—they are all third-terms, they are all pivotal to the plays they populate, and the plays in which they appear adhere, for the most part, to melodramatic conventions. My decision to focus on the feminine examples, first, emphasizes the degree to which femininity has been utilized as a means to negotiate national identity and second, to highlight the (mostly) male-authored nature of these tropes and hence emphasize the degree to which patriarchal dominance is at work in them (or is that which is worked against). The feminist orientation of my analysis serves, then, as both a way to consider the traditions of female representation in United States culture and to explicitly connect those traditions to patriarchal ideology, connecting both to the distressed character of national identity.

In chapter one I examine the figure of the white virgin in Republican-era Gothic plays. The white virgin is an interstitial figure between the idealized mother and the abject whore; her threat lies in the possibility that she could ultimately become either. The question of to which path circumstances and choice will drive her is a question influenced by post-Revolutionary distress over the order/disorder binary. Drawing on the work of the New Hysterians, nineteenth-century proscriptions for women's behavior, and nineteenth-century medical texts on female biology, this chapter considers white America's preoccupation with female purity as it developed in tandem with the field of gynecology, and the relation of both to masculine fears of social disorder. It is no accident that the study of hysteria was raised to the level of science through gynecology just as the logic of gendered spheres was crystallizing into what Barbara Welter and

others call the Cult of True Womanhood. Through such Gothic plays as *Fontainville Abbey* 1795) and *Bluebeard* (1802) by William Dunlap, *The Daemon: or, The Clock has Struck!* (1808) by John Turnbull and *Bertram* (ca. 1816), this chapter considers how masculine fears of social disorder found their parallel in the threat of feminine disorder perpetually present but (almost) always avoided in the figure of the white virgin. This chapter is placed first because, as my analyses demonstrate, hegemonic notions of the white feminine reemerge in later chapters to at least partially determine the conventions most commonly used to represent the helpful Indian princess and the mixed-race slave woman.

Chapter two considers the distress related to the fear of displacement and disaffiliation that I argue underlie the civilized/savage binary in American society. The civilized/savage binary, in operation before Europeans ever set foot on American soil, was laden with practices of conquest and dispossession justified by Europe's civilizing project.[7] In the United States after the Revolutionary War, the U. S. army had won freedom from the British, but they still had to contend with native populations to achieve ownership of much of the land. In the Colonial era and for a decade or two after the Revolutionary War, land was often purchased from Native Americans legally and without violence. Just as often, however, violence and dishonesty were used to attain Native lands. By the time the Indian Relocation Act was signed by President Andrew Jackson in 1830, American/Native American relations had deteriorated to policies of bullying and genocide. Justification for this violence was couched in the optimistically named ideology of Manifest Destiny. In this chapter, I discuss the helpful Indian princess as embodied on stage by Pocahontas. Daughter of a Native American chief but similar in mind, speech, and

[7] The creation of a democratic government following the Revolutionary War did not mean the immediate erasure of the country's origins as a network of colonies established by a larger imperial project. This legacy of colonialism is as American as democracy and so its residual effects must be considered.

spirit to the white settlers, Pocahontas occupies a space somewhere between civilized and savage. Pocahontas's representations in various plays in the Jacksonian era reflect the increasingly fraught nature of American/Native American relations. The repeatedly appropriated narrative of Pocahontas's ostensibly historical tale offers intriguing insight into the unease and distress of a population whose "land of the free" was in large part stolen through force, which theft was itself sublimated under the banner of civilization.

The mixed-race slave woman of antebellum slavery melodramas, the subject of chapter three, is a complicated example of interstitial femininity because she is inculcated in a variety of competing binaries. Her status as a slave locates her in the "not A" term of the citizen/slave binary, while her mixed-race heritage makes her a third-term that troubles that same binary. This aspect of her identity further calls into question the stability of the white/black binary on which the citizen/slave binary rests. Finally, as many mixed-race slaves were the product of the rape of black slave women by their white masters, her very existence is a visceral reminder of the erotic violence that created her but which not even slave narratives of the era name explicitly as rape. In an environment where even mere *rumors* of the *possibility* of free black men and white women sitting near each other in a public hall incited riots, such as the Farren riots of Philadelphia in 1838 (Nathans 178), representational portrayals of miscegenated characters were extremely political. Because of these multiple significations, any representation of mixed-race slave women is necessarily complex and fraught with distress, an ontology that reflects the chaos and confusion that characterizes that antebellum era. In this chapter, I analyze the mixed-race slave women in George L. Aiken's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), *The Escape: or, Leap for Freedom* (1858) by William Wells Brown, and *The Octoroon: or, Life in Louisiana* (1859) by Dion Boucicault. I argue that these plays utilize the divided identity of the mixed-race slave

woman to emphasize the extreme dystopia that the presence of slavery in a democratic society produces. My reading relies on black feminist thinkers whose scholarship provides a powerful counter-discourse to the history of black female representation in the United States. Works such as bell hooks' and Angela Davis' early ground-breaking studies and the more recent scholarship of Hortense Spillers and Saidiya Hartman provide a theoretical foundation for explicating the relationship between the reality of slavery in the United States, the crisis of citizenship it represents, and its spectacularization on the American popular stage.

CHAPTER ONE

Republican-Era Gothic Plays: White Virginity and the "Distress of Independence"

It is a dark and stormy night. A virginal woman of marriageable age wanders the halls of a crumbling abbey late at night, searching for clues to help her understand the abbey's mysterious past. The light of her candle flickers in the dark, casting shadows that seem to come to life. In a dusty chamber she discovers an abandoned chest—will what is inside save her and all those around her? Or will her solitary midnight foray prove to be hers, and everyone else's, undoing…?

The above passage, a summary of events from Act three Scene one of William Dunlap's *Fontainville Abbey* (1795), describes a scene that could come from any number of the Gothic plays that thrived on American and British stages from the 1790s to the early 1830s. A gloomy, chaotic atmosphere, eerie castles and abbeys with twisting corridors and secret rooms, the menace of the supernatural, and virginal women who (almost) always save the day despite great danger—these were all common features of the Gothic plays recently imported from the London stage.[8] The popularity of this British genre prompted a plethora of adaptations as well as several American-authored works; Gothic plays also proved extremely beneficial for the fledgling American theatrical economy, filling houses with repeat performances and finding their way into star actors' repertoires. A predecessor to the more traditional hero-saves-the-heroine melodrama of 1830s onward, the common formula was of a young, virginal woman who, often with the help

[8] Gothic plays descend from Gothic novels, first popularized in London by Ann Radcliffe with such works as *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Italian*, both of which were adapted into stage plays (Anthony 10). According to Anthony, *The Carmelite* by Richard Cumberland was the first Gothic play of note performed in the United States, premiering in 1794 (159).

and support of a mother figure, saves herself and those around her from evil men, wicked witches, or both. Male characters figure prominently in this genre, but almost never as the primary agents of resolution. With a few exceptions, Gothic plays end with the virgin's purity very much intact, her marriage to the hero on the horizon, and the moral universe restored.

According to M. Susan Anthony, author of *Gothic Plays and American Society*, the only existing monograph to deal specifically with Gothic plays in the United States, "between 1794 and 1830, productions of Gothic plays were so popular that they rivaled those of Shakespeare in all the theatrical centers" (143). Gothic plays, then, qualify as one of the first theatrical genres that Americans found worthy of adapting to suit their own tastes.[9] What was it about the dark atmosphere, the vulnerable yet (when appropriate) assertive women, and the often ineffectual men of these plays that so entranced the largely young, white, male audiences of the Republican era?[10] In other words, if a man's home is his castle, what does it mean for it always to be crumbling away? Reading Gothic plays in light of the social and political tensions of the Republican era demonstrates the connection between white male social distress and emerging cultural views of the white woman's role in the nascent American social landscape. In this chapter, I consider how the interstitial feminine figure of the virgin functioned in the atmosphere of distress regarding social disorder following the United States' victory in the Revolutionary War, what I call the "distress of independence." I consider how the disease paradigm of female

[9] Comedies of manners was another genre, exemplified in the early play *The Contrast* by Royall Tyler (1790).
[10] I understand the Republican era to refer to the period ranging from the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783 to the election of Andrew Jackson to president in 1828. This era is typified by the adoption of the Constitution, efforts to stabilize the United States' economy, the initial articulation of the power, role, and limits of the federal government, and efforts by the United States to establish its place amongst the European nations via such conflicts as the War of 1812 and such political proclamations as the Monroe doctrine of 1820. While on a political level the concern seemed to be with defining federal policy and international relations, on the social level, as my analysis demonstrates, the theatre of this era implies a preoccupation with exploring the moral and national character of the new nation. This preoccupation gained in momentum and complexity throughout both the Jacksonian and antebellum eras.

hysteria developed alongside and informed this same atmosphere of distress, contributing to an ideal/pathological binary of white femininity that simultaneously exacerbated and helped neutralize the distress surrounding the androcentric preoccupation with the order/disorder binary so prevalent in this era of newly won freedom.

Part I: The Maternal Body Politic; or, How the Personal Became the Political

> *"The first marks we shall perceive of our declension will appear among our women. Their idleness, ignorance, and profligacy will be the harbingers of our ruin."*
>
> - *Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts Upon Female Education" (1787)*

A span of approximately ten years separates the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783 and the firm reestablishment of theatre in the former colonies. In that time, the country's founders laid out a rough blueprint for the new democratic government in the Constitution, while the question of slavery in a free republic complicated its ratification and exposed fissures in the united campaign that defeated the British. Political factions formed when disagreements occurred over the establishment of a national bank. Immigrants began to populate the cities, initiating a trickle that would grow to a flood in the 1820s and '30s, while the economic landscape slowly shifted away from local cottage industry to larger industrial firms, attracting more young people to the cities. This shifting landscape prompted moral and social leaders to publish endless tracts concerning the roles men and women needed to play in order to maintain a free, thriving society. In short, while victory against the British was decisive, little else was certain in the new Republic. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson asserts, "It is for the happiness of the united society to harmonize as much as possible in matters they must of necessity transact together" (84). In spite of this ideal of unity underlying the democratic

process in principle, the political, cultural, and economic diversity of the United States made reaching actual consensus virtually impossible.

As I discussed in my introduction, political, religious, and social leaders in the United States often interpreted the United States' heterogeneity as disorder.[11] Sociologist G. J. Barker-Benfield notes, "the ambiguous term 'disorder' [was] used to denote both physical/psychical malfunctions, and social trespasses of a sexual and political kind" ("Spermatic" 385). This understanding of disorder links bodily behavior to social cohesion. To combat the threat of disorder posed by so many competing perspectives and subjectivities, two often adversarial yet equally influential ideological positions sought to create, at the very least, an abstracted social homogeneity by emphasizing the value of order over disorder. These were the Enlightenment values placed on rational thought and civil society, and the Christian revivalism of the 1790s through the 1830s known as the Second Great Awakening (Price 916). Although ideologically at odds, as I discuss below, both Enlightenment thinking and Protestant Christian revivalism provided interpretative frameworks through which new Americans attempted to define both American culture and their place within it. Importantly for my project, each movement articulated the same belief that the discipline of the female body was necessary for the social, political, and spiritual health of the nation.

Christian revivalists feared the influence of Enlightenment ideology on American society. Christian moral leaders, especially those operating within Calvinistic theology, considered the Enlightenment value on rationality as a threat not only to their faith but also to social health, for a nation devoid of God would be a nation condemned to fall to the evil designs of Satan (Price

[11] Words such as "diversity" in the above paragraph and "heterogeneity" in the preceding sentence are contemporary terms I use to describe the social milieu of the post-Revolutionary United States. I do not mean to imply that the critics to whom I refer utilized these terms in their analyses.

917). Religious leaders also feared the spiritual repercussions for those displaced from friends and family as Americans settled into new lands acquired by the United States across the Appalachian Mountains. According to historian Barton Price, "As citizens relocated, they experienced social and commercial dislocation in ways that brought insecurity. The Second Great Awakening not only revitalized Protestant evangelical religion in pervasive ways, but it also assuaged the anxieties that Americans experienced" (917).

Despite these ideological differences, Christian revivalists and Enlightenment-influenced thinkers shared the belief that external signs of order signal a well-ordered interior. For example, grooming, politeness, and an upwardly mobile lifestyle based on the principles of hard work (what Richard Butsch refers to generally as "respectability") communicated a commitment to social and moral laws and practices intended to maintain order (Butsch 374-377).[12] Revivalists added outward shows of virtue and piety to the list of observable behaviors that indicated one's allegiance to the proper social and moral order (Kubiak 49).

Although reacting in many ways to what each saw as the others' extreme beliefs, Enlightenment thinkers and Calvinist revivalists both saw the formation of normative heterosexual family units with strictly defined gender roles as means to achieve their ends. A home in which men and women served predictable roles would create a consistent and ordered private realm that would be further reflected in an organized public life. The Protestant emphasis on "piety, prudery, and propriety" (Micale 49) helped normalize not only the tasks of those in the home but the attitude with which they should be carried out. Enlightenment-driven medical developments reinforced this thinking by emphasizing how men and women's different biological predispositions and reproductive systems fitted them for different social roles (Barker-

[12] See also Barker-Benfield's book, *The Horror of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America*, especially Part I.

Benfield, "Spermatic" 382). In both professional and popular texts, medical authorities warned against disregarding these "natural" somatic "facts."

While men and women were both important to maintaining the national order, the ideal woman stabilized it by providing men refuge from public life in well-run homes and serving as bastions of moral perfection (understood as both religious devotion and circumscribed sexuality intended only for heterosexual marriage and employed only for the reproduction of future citizens). The white female was simultaneously held up as the guardian of social order and, because of the supposed volatility of her reproductive system, the greatest potential threat to that order. This ambivalent view emerges repeatedly in advice manuals to mothers. William Abbott, for example, writing in his 1812 advice manual *The Mother at Home*, extolls, "I do not know any manner in which humanity, charity, and patriotism can be more laudably exerted . . . than in enabling mothers to bring up a healthy and hardy race of men . . ." (vi). However, later in his work, Abbott warns that "in all cases of dwarfishness and deformity, ninety-nine out of a hundred are owing to the folly, misconduct, or neglect of mothers" (69). Underlying these contradictory and unscientific judgments of women, I argue, are men's expressions of masculine distress about the stability of society and men's place within it. The projection of these fears onto proscriptions for feminine behavior influenced conventions concerning imaginative representations of women. My analysis of Gothic plays in this chapter focuses on the ambivalent view of women as both the path to redemption and the road to perdition.

Abbott's writing, both in its content and its inclusion in the advice manual genre intended for general public consumption, marks the degree to which women's reproductive bodies became public in this era. The Rousseauean belief that mothers, with whom children spent their formative years, were the font from which future citizens would literally imbibe the love of the

fatherland as they drank in their mothers' milk prompted this publicization (Rousseau, *Emile* 46). Mothers, and women generally as putative mothers, would provide the moral and social education necessary to produce citizens aligned with national values. To fail in this task was to produce children doomed to exist outside of the social order. According to Rousseau, a child "abandoned to himself in the midst of other men from birth would be the most disfigured of all" (Rousseau, *Emile* 27). Here Rousseau equates lack of correct moral formation in the individual with social deformity, which, if allowed to afflict citizens on a large scale, would spread to the entire society. In the nineteenth century, the inability to conform to or participate in society, i.e. the insistence on an anti-social subject position, informed both the meaning of the term "monstrous" and its ubiquitous use in this era. Art historian and critic Francis Connelly notes that what is monstrous "makes visual what is most threatening, inspiring fear and repulsion as it tears at the ultimate boundary between self and oblivion" (115). In the Enlightenment-influenced mind, existence outside the social order was indeed akin to consignment to the oblivion of irrationality, savagery, and intellectual darkness.[13] How, then, can a society guarantee the reproduction and socialization of correctly indoctrinated citizens? For Rousseau, it is only the mother who is capable of carrying out this awesome responsibility. By the early nineteenth century, this notion informed medical treatment of women in European societies as well as the United States.

At least one problem with Rousseau's thinking, however, lay in the imagined maladies and weaknesses of the female body itself. Despite advances in conceptions of *man* and *his*

[13] It is important to note the gendered nature of these attributes. Rationality, civilization, and intellectual exploration were masculine pursuits for which the white male body was assumed especially suited. The "monstrous" attributes were feminine, attested to by the common feminization of the "savage" peoples outside the rational society and the negative impression of the "unruly" feminine body. Women participated in the rational order through male intervention (both spiritual and medical) and self-discipline.

faculties, Enlightenment thinkers still gleaned their understanding of *woman* and *her* faculties from the archaic misperceptions inherited from Hippocrates' theories of the wandering womb and the permeability of women's bodies. According to Hippocrates, the womb is prone to wandering and the internal disorder provoked by these perambulations was thought to account for the entire range of female illnesses. Hippocrates also proposed that women's skin was more absorbent then men's, making the womb (and its contents) susceptible to negative influences (including a woman's own emotions) (Kukla 5). Woman's nature, understood as permeable, susceptible, and ruled by the fluctuations of her reproductive system, made her predisposed to moral and ideological corruption. This predisposition for disorder made masculine authorities suspicious of women's ability to reproduce successfully the right kind of citizens. According to Rebecca Kukla in her book *Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture, and Mother's Bodies*, "By analogy, a hysterical body politic is also one that is incoherent and divided against itself, stranded without a general will that can govern all its parts, in virtue of the improper order and placement of wombs. Hysterical maternal bodies, then, can produce hysterical body politics . . ." (67). Given this risk, men could not trust women to monitor their own disorder. The reliance on maternal influence to engineer citizens indoctrinated with the social order "transformed the project of forming human nature into a civic project appropriately monitored by public institutions," as opposed to a "private process governed by the logic of maternal excess and restraint" (Kukla 29).

It is significant that what Kukla terms the "systematic deprivatization of the maternal body" still required the private regulation of the woman, since self-surveillance was as crucial to the project of producing a well-ordered social body, as was the public gaze (73). This required that women accept this articulation of themselves as prone to hysteria, with such acceptance

signaling the androcentric indoctrination of the female subject. Literary theorist Amy Kaplan finds evidence of this internalized ambivalent self-perception of women in the genre of the American antebellum domestic novel. She notes, "The narrative of female self-discipline that is so central to the domestic novel might be viewed as a kind of civilizing process in which the woman plays the role of both civilizer and savage" (A. Kaplan 202). Like Kukla, Kaplan argues both that women internalized Enlightenment rhetoric (from which the civilized/savage binary originates), and that female behavior was determined by national ideologies particular to American expansionism: "My point is that where the domestic novel appears most turned inward to the private sphere of female inferiority, we often find subjectivity scripted by narratives of nation and empire" (202). For good or ill, American social and political discourse posited the feminine in a synechdochic relationship to the national, with distress over the volatility of this relationship raising the stakes for governance of the female body. In the United States, this governance took place somewhere at the intersection of (Enlightenment) medicine and (revivalist Christian) morality.

Following Rousseau's idealization of the maternal influence as the key to a free society's stability, American culture espoused the invaluable position of the mother to the health of the Republic. Abbott warns in his advice manual, "Mothers have as powerful an influence over the welfare of future generations as all other causes combined" (165). The prevalence of the concern with developing "good" mothers is evident in its centrality to debates regarding women's education. Arguments both for and against educating women often referred back to the potentially positive or deleterious effects of education on women's ability to discharge adequately their maternal responsibilities. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg discuss this in their foundational article "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of

Woman and her Role in Nineteenth-Century America." They note that arguments against white women's education were rooted in the same understanding of female biology that informs the hysteric-woman disease paradigm:

> The brain and the ovary could not develop at the same time. Society, mid-century physicians warned, must protect the higher good of [Anglo-Saxon] racial health by avoiding situations in which adolescent girls taxed their intellectual faculties in academic competition. "Why," as one physician pointedly asked, "spoil a good mother by making an ordinary grammarian?" (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 340)

In this view, intellectual pursuits posed a danger to women's ability to bear children, which in turn endangered the future of the nation.

My own research revealed arguments *in support of* female education but which still took biology into account, the difference being that these arguments used the limitations of biology as a reason *for* education rather than against it. Women's status as biologically female predisposed them to domestic life. However, a woman's instincts alone could not prepare her for the specific demands of the American wife and mother; these must be learned through patriarchally inflected curricula. In his *A Plea for the Liberal Education of Woman*, William T. Hamilton writes, "The chief duties of women do unquestionably lie within the domestic circle, and to qualify her for the right discharge of her duties as a wife and mother is, or should be, the great object of her education . . ." (Hamilton 20). Hamilton articulates eight reasons why women should be educated, all of which relate to their duties as mothers. His eighth point concludes, "I advocate the high intellectual cultivation in woman, because . . . it is the surest means by which to ennoble the character of the nation" (22). Not wanting to be mistaken in his arguments, Hamilton is

careful to specify that he does not mean that a woman's education should take her outside the domestic circle or elevate her to the same status as a man. He advises women not to flaunt their education, noting that "A pedant is always odious; a female pedant doubly so" (Hamilton 27). He is also careful to emphasize that housekeeping is paramount to women's responsibilities, as a smart wife will be displeasing if the house is not in order (27). Whether concerned with the production of weak children through female intellectual overstimulation or advocating education as the best means of ensuring that women exert the appropriate influence over future citizens, both concerns link to national health and patriarchal efforts to ensure that only well-ordered (white) women were allowed to influence it.

New Hysterian scholar Ray Porter notes that while the Greeks had seen women as sexually inverted and inferior versions of men, "during the eighteenth century and beyond, medicine and culture were abandoning that view and combining to reconstruct women as radically *other*. And not only other, but *bizarre*" (Porter 250) (emphasis added).[14] Mark Micale, also a part of the New Hysterian school, argues that the medical profession "was aggressively pressed into the service of discovering and maintaining" the ostensibly essential differences that helped maintain these bizarre fictions (49). One of the most important, and rabidly defended, differences between men and women was woman's association with and predisposition to hysteria. In what Micale calls a neo-Hippocratic understanding of hysteria, "Femaleness itself became the key determinant of hysterical illness, and physicians increasingly defined women's nature as inextricably bound up with their reproductive anatomy and physiology" (Micale 58).

[14] The self-dubbed "New Hysterians" emerged in the late 1980s and include such scholars as Elaine Showalter, Roy Porter, Mark Micale, and Sander L. Gilman. By way of feminist critiques and critical historiography, New Hysterians brought the concept of hysteria into academic discourse and concerned themselves with analyzing it in ways that expand our understanding of hysteria beyond its circumscription into psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. A foundational text in this vein is Showalter's *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (1985).

Where prior to this, in the late seventeenth century, doctors conceded the possibility of hysteria in men, Micale observes that "[a] great wave of amnesia" occurred regarding these theories in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century (49).[15] While some doctors did propose the theory of male hysteria, they were in a distinct minority (65-67). Porter speculates that "the nineteenth century was hysteria's golden age precisely because it was then that the *moral presence* of the doctor became normative as never before in regulating intimate lives" (Porter 242) (emphasis added). This combination of the moral and empirical that influences so much of nineteenth-century science resulted in a direct equation of hysteria, female sexuality, and the feminine reproductive body. Michel Foucault explains the hystericization of women as

> a threefold process whereby the feminine body was analyzed—qualified and disqualified—as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it was integrated into the sphere of medical practices, by reason of a pathology intrinsic to it; whereby, finally, it was placed in organic communication with the social body (whose regular fecundity it was supposed to ensure), the family space (of which it had to be a substantial functioning element), and the life of children (which it produced and had to guarantee, by virtue of a biologic-moral responsibility lasting through the entire period of the children's education): the Mother, with her negative image of "nervous woman," constituted the most visible form of this hystericization. (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 104)

Here Foucault articulates both the process and its effects—the epistemology which seeks to normalize ideal femininity (that which reproduces the family unit in terms of the social ideal mandated by law and custom) destabilizes that same ideal by undermining it with rhetoric of

[15] The irony behind this observation is that amnesia in women was assumed to be a symptom of hysteria.

disease, contagion, and failure. This is ominous in a country in which that same feminine body is expected to reproduce national ideology through its reproduction of national citizens. The only way women could fulfill their function successfully was to mediate their sexuality through their religious devotion and the medical profession. Women could not engage with the social world purely on their own terms, only under the aegis of the masculine paradigm. Micale identifies this attitude as partially a side effect of "the masculinization of knowledge" that characterized scientific inquiry (101).

The proliferation of the female hysteric as a threat to society and the doctor as the barrier to that threat depended on its constant reproduction in both medical texts and popular literature. The same era that saw the examination of women's bodies come into accepted medical practice also saw the normalization of the documentation of those exams in medical texts and advice manuals. As Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish,* "The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents to capture and fix them . . ." (189). Through the paradigm of visual examination and its inscription into the written record, the pathology of white women's bodies transcended theory to become fact, buttressed by the authority and apparent neutrality of the scientific observer. Documenting female pathology led to a body of medical texts sharing congruent theoretical foundations which, considered collectively, promoted a feeling of consensus. Foucault characterizes the power of this type of discursive activity as disciplinary power, which, unlike juridical power, "is more dependent on bodies and what they do than upon the Earth and its products" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge,* 104). He notes:

> The discourse of discipline has nothing in common with that of law, rule or sovereign rule. The disciplines may well be the carriers of a discourse that speaks

> of a rule, but this is not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but a natural rule, a norm. The code they come to define is not that of law but that of *normalisation*. (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 106) (emphasis added)

As I discuss further in this chapter, the discourse recorded in medical texts on female pathology (the foundation of modern gynecology) was but one part of the constellation of discourses that expounds on society's dependence on femininity, the formulations of ideal femininity, and the specifics of if or whether this ideal was attainable.

There is one final point that will help contextualize the relationship between America's emergent national identity, female pathology, and the theatre—the relationship of all of these to masculine distress. In the conclusion to Part One of her book, Kukla makes the following provocative assertion: "Insofar as hysteria is distinctively a disorder and fragmentation grounded in a disordering of the space of the female reproductive body, we can read the late modern anxieties surrounding both maternal bodies themselves, and their impact upon the larger body politic, as hysterical anxieties" (97). Here Kukla equates feminine hysteria to widespread masculine anxieties, manifested as physical and mental distress. Hysteria, as Porter explains, was "a disorder whereby nonspecific distress was given somatic contours" (229). In the case of hysteria these contours are specifically feminine, but femininity as articulated by a specifically male gaze. Hysteria became a name for feminine disorder that men could control once it was known, assuming hysterical women were willing to accept male medical intervention.

Whether the hysterical woman of Enlightenment-influenced medicine or the morally disordered "fallen woman" of the Christian morality, the proliferation of femininity as pathological reflects a masculine distress over not just women in society but over the possibility of widespread social and political collapse. As Barker-Benfield phrases it, "Rebellious women

threatened the United States with disintegration on the scale of the fall of the Roman Empire" (Barker-Benfield "Spermatic" 385). This mistrust of women translated, I argue, as both reverent fascination with an abstracted idealized femininity that could save all Americans and a terrified disgust for the threat their natural disorder ostensibly posed. This preoccupation is apparent in the idealization of the mother as the epitome of the ordered feminine and the abjection of prostitutes and other sexually demonstrative women as their antithesis. The focus on these two extremes suggests a mother/not-mother binary that influenced men's perceptions of women's social roles at this time. Categorizing women into these two poles is itself a function of ordering and provides a sense of stability; viewed in this manner, women were easily sorted, recognized, and managed appropriately. Sitting somewhere uncomfortably in between these two positions, however, is the not-quite-future-mother but not-quite-future-whore, a figure otherwise known as the virgin. If the mother/not-mother binary reflects a semblance of control over the unruly feminine, the virgin focuses distress over the possibility of the feminine overflowing those binary constrictions. A mother's fate is known (or at least heavily prescribed), as is the prostitute's (her degeneracy will lead to her death). The virgin, however, is in an unpredictable process of becoming, an undetermined potentiality that threatens patriarchal hierarchy as envisioned in the heterosexual family unit. Not only is she undefined in terms of the ideal or the abject, but her disruption of the binary suggests that she might find other viable modes of social participation that resemble *neither* the ideal *nor* the abject, such as pursuing a profession or practicing birth control.[16] While the virgin is a staple of most melodramatic forms, it is her presence in the early Gothic plays of the Republican theatre that best exemplifies the distressed nature of the masculine relationship to national stability as cathected in notions of the ideal white feminine.

[16] My use of the term "abject" follows Julia Kristeva's articulation of it in *The Powers of Horror.*

Part II: Mothers, Whores, and the Space Between: The Interstitial Virgin and the Gothic Drama

i. Gothic Plays: Fearful Dramaturgy for a Frightened Nation

The American Republican society found itself in a position in which its social values and practices remained partially formulated but whose cultural tastes and habits were still tied to the British aristocracy it denounced. In his historical survey of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American drama, Tice L. Miller notes, "a new republic needed plays that reflected its own republican virtues—not aristocratic ones—and promoted egalitarian principles" (30). Many American theatre historians, including Miller, tend to identify plays such as Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1790) and James Nelson Barker's *La Belle Sauvage; or, the Indian Princess* (1808) as the first examples of "true" American drama. This is understandable, as these plays take place in identifiable American locales and represent recognizable American historical figures or character types. However, broadening the concept of what exactly qualifies as "national drama" creates a compelling case for considering Gothic plays as belonging to this class. An article dated June 1, 1827 from *The American Quarterly Review* defines national drama as "founded upon domestic incidents—illustrating or satirizing domestic manners—and above all displaying a generous chivalry in the maintenance and vindication of those great and illustrious peculiarities of situations and characters, by which we are distinguished from all other nations" ("American Drama"). This definition limits the national drama to recognizable personalities and events exclusive to American daily life.

However, recognizable *ideologies and moral codes*, I argue, also underlie the representation of recognizable people, places, and events. These ideologies are not always the overt focus of the drama but are no less formative to the manner in which playwrights dramatize people, places, and events. In this sense, then, while Gothic plays are not specifically American in terms of the people, places, and events they represent, the political and moral ideologies they espouse are all-American, as I discuss below. This interpretation suggests that the Gothic plays possess an allegorical quality, as they are more philosophical than mimetic. Classifying American Gothic plays as "national drama" takes seriously the extent to which the behavior and preoccupations of their characters intimately reflected the concerns of its audiences. While taking place in distant, sometimes fictitious lands and featuring aristocratic characters, the Gothic plays written and/or adapted by American playwrights reflect Republican distress over the relationship between gender and social stability.

Gothic plays, although similar to melodramas in that they employ music to underscore mood, feature stock characters, and reward and punish virtue and vice respectively, differ in important ways. The most specific deviation between the Gothic and the melodramatic is mood, which arises out of the conventions of Gothic drama. These conventions include a "gloomy, uneasy atmosphere, an innocent young woman fleeing a mesmeric, sophisticated villain" and "an unabashed use of supernatural events, which sometimes called for spectacular effects" (Anthony 6). Gothic plays also differed in the types of roles available to actors and actresses. Unlike melodrama, heroes of Gothic drama were often older men, respected by younger male heroes for their wisdom and life experience (58). Additionally, Gothic plays, "especially those written before 1810," often featured an elderly matron figure, either a middle-aged woman unrelated to the heroine, or an older relation such as a cousin or aunt (67). Finally, like Gothic novels, Gothic

plays are set in a time and place other than the present, ensuring that "there would be no intrusion of everyday standards of factual probability . . ." (Hume 286). The ubiquity of locales set amongst dark forests, ruined castles, and subterranean grottos allowed for a greater array of fantastical events than would be tolerated if in more realistic and familiar settings. Melodrama, on the other hand, especially as it evolved toward the mid-nineteenth century, capitalized on recognizable settings. These differences in mood, characterization, and location mark a genre that explores a more widely variegated scope of human experience than the typical melodrama. Treating Gothic plays as allegorical also encourages a more symbolic reading of the texts; unanchored in time or place, the philosophical or ideological positions apparent in them cannot be as easily dismissed as regional idiosyncrasies. This also makes them more experimental, or at least ostensibly so, as they are not limited to replicating "real" circumstances or "real" people. All of these characteristics suit the exploratory mood of the new United States still discovering and articulating the parameters of national belonging.

American-authored and/or –adapted Gothic plays differed from their British counterparts in subtle but significant ways. In an enterprise dependent on public approbation to succeed, American theatrical managers opted to produce plays with morally certain endings. Anthony notes, "American plays . . . emphasized that heaven would protect and reward the virtuous. Although British plays provided happy endings . . . American plays belabored the point" (132). To complete the formula of virtue rewarded, "American plays . . . stressed that heaven would punish the wicked" (133). This convention emphasizes the presence of an absolute moral universe in which the players are easily recognized and the scales of good and evil will always be restored to balance. It also illustrates the extent to which cultural output centered on the order/disorder binary that informed other aspects of American life. Moral order, in this and other

theatrical forms, was itself an aesthetic convention. The other significant difference between American and British Gothic plays was their treatment of sexual situations. Regardless of a Gothic play's national origins, heroines in these plays often find themselves the prey of lustful men. Where British characters could overtly reference this threat as sexual, American plays rarely mentioned anything related to sex directly, relying instead on vague euphemisms and obscure innuendo. This prudery was both a reflection of and a response to the Puritan perception of sexuality and its putative dangers for society.

ii. The Gothic Plays and Maternal Dis/Order

While the interstitial femininity inhabited by the virgins of the Gothic plays most completely contextualizes the masculine distress informing representations of femininity generally, the virgin as a third-term, like the other femininities explored throughout this project, only exists in reference to the binary that the figure explodes. The virgin is the third-term between the mother/Anti-Mother binary into which I argue white women were organized based on their sexual behavior and resemblance to the ideal of the heterosexual family unit. The mother, the "A" term of the pair, is the epitome of correctly performed white womanhood. Conversely, the Anti-Mother, the "Not A" term, typified by the prostitute, participates incorrectly in the ideal reproductive order and thus threatens the stability of that order. The virgin, as the interstitial femininity between these two, has the troubling potential to become eventually either the mother or the Anti-Mother. The mothers and Anti-Mothers of Gothic plays map the extreme limits of potential idealization or abjection, providing the context for

recognizing the virgin as the space-between. Exploring particular examples of these figures in the drama helps demonstrate the distress circulating throughout incarnations of the virgin figure.

The mother as an idealized bastion of order and appropriate patriotic influence is apparent in all positive representations of maternal figures in Gothic plays. These figures represent the reproduction of ideal femininity, resembling what Kukla calls the Fetish Mother. Kukla defines "fetish" as "an object perceived as having inherent normative value and power . . ." (82). The body of the Fetish Mother "is a perfect and uninterrupted whole," and is also "a public spectacle symbolizing the possibility of well-ordered human nature free from hysterical incoherence, artificial hybrids, or deformed monstrosity" (82). In other words, the Fetish Mother is a figure whose body exhibits no signs (whether through her own appearance and behavior or that of her offspring) of disorder, disorganization, or excess (all equivocal terms); she is "emblematic of non-hysterical society" (82). The mothers of Gothic plays, I argue, nearly always reflect the same qualities as Kukla's Fetish Mother. Most often, these figures become maternal by circumstances that leave them in charge of young, motherless virgins of marriageable age. Their position as foster mothers is significant, since their bodies have never opened to give birth, making them "perfect and uninterrupted whole[s]." Whatever imperfect subjects exist in society, the Fetish Mother has not spawned them.

One of the earliest examples of the Fetish Mother figure resides in William Dunlap's *Fontainville Abbey* (1795), which features Madame La Motte, a woman past her maternal prime but who becomes a foster mother just prior to the opening scene of the play. Through various circumstances, the La Mottes, fleeing bad debts, are put in charge of young Adeline, a virgin of marriageable age who was violently driven out of her home by a man she believes to be her father. Madame La Motte represents the Fetish Mother because she is the epitome of the closed,

calm female body who has never opened to give birth. Nineteenth-century American society often viewed childlessness as a serious failing. As Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg note, "despite the commonsensical view that many . . . ailments resulted from childbearing, physicians often contended that far greater difficulties could be expected in childless women. Motherhood was woman's normal destiny, and those females who thwarted the promise immanent in their body's design must expect to suffer" (336). Madame La Motte's lack of children, however, does not imply a personal failing because she displays all the qualities of the ideal maternal figure in her attitude towards her ward. This is evident in Act one, when, speaking of Adeline, Madame La Motte resolves, "We will protect her. She is good and gentle. / Kind Providence perhaps hath sent her to us / To cheer our night of woe, perchance to guide / Our wandering footsteps back to happiness" (Dunlap, *Fontainville* 1.1.188-192). In this sentiment lies double proof of Madame La Motte as the Fetish Mother; first, she accepts her maternal role without hesitation; second, she echoes the masculine value of the ability of a well-ordered woman to exert an ordering influence, as she hopes the chaste Adeline will "guide / Our wandering footsteps back to happiness."

Another excellent example of the ideal mother as understood through the patriarchal paradigm of order is Clotilda in *The Wood Daemon; or, the Clock has Struck!* by John Turnbull.[17] Clotilda is unique among the mother figures in Gothic plays in that she is a blood relative to those she mothers. Alexina, Clotilda's sister and the former countess of the region,

[17] First performed May 9, 1808 at the Boston Theatre, *The Wood Daemon* proved very successful, reappearing in Boston and other theatrical centers many times in the years following its debut. This play, which takes place in Germany, centers on the kidnapping and rescue of a young child Leolyn, secret heir to the kingdom currently ruled by the usurper Count Hardy Canute. Unbeknownst to all until late in the play, the Count transacted a Faustian bargain with the witch Saugerida in which he agreed to sacrifice a child to her every year in exchange for Saguerida's magic spell that transformed the Count from a physically deformed man into a picture of masculine health and virility. The count discovers that Leolyn, the rightful heir whom the Count presumed dead, is alive. The Count resolves to make Leolyn that year's sacrifice to Saugerida. The action concludes in a spectacle of magic, near escapes, and virtue rewarded, with the virgin Una as almost the sole engineer of the happy ending.

died eight years previously. Before her death, however, Alexina brought Leolyn to Clotilda to protect him from being a sacrifice to the demon Saugerida. Alexina begged Clotilda to love Leolyn like a mother, and Clotilda, in pledging to do so, became his mother. For both Clotilda and Madame La Motte, motherhood is performative, defined by action and not biological connections. That she considers herself a mother and not merely a guardian is apparent in such lines as "My child . . . / stolen from my fostering bosom! Ah poor Leolyn! whither dost / thou wander? Merciful heaven, restore him to his / doating [sic] mother's arms!" (Turnbull 1.1.152-156). Clotilda uses the vocabulary of motherhood to describe her and Leolyn's relationship, such as when she tells Una, "I have nursed and educated [Leolyn] as my son…" (189). As noted previously, this sentiment resonates with the Rousseauean importance of the mother, who, given the charge of children in their early years, will nurse them with both mother's milk and with the correct moral code.

Clotilda, while possessing many of the same maternal characteristics as Lady La Motte, is different in one significant way; Clotilda is not yet married, despite her maternal status. She is a virgin mother, a designation that links her with the Virgin Mary of Christian theology. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was called upon to bear and raise the Son of God. There is a slight yet intriguing parallel between the angel coming to Mary to beseech her to accept the will of God and Alexina coming to Clotilda in the midst of a dark and stormy night to beg her to take Leolyn in to her care. Too close of a comparison might have appeared blasphemous to nineteenth-century audiences, but this subtle connection is a comment on the reverence for the maternal subject position and the resonance of motherhood with the highest of spiritual callings in the ultimate service of God.

The Fetish Mother, in her commitment to duty, her fierce protection of her children, and her immortal influence, is a force of righteous good that brings light to the dark and often subterranean worlds of the Gothic plays. She provides an example for her young, virginal counterparts to follow. One of the most important aspects of this example is a lack of sexuality. According to Anthony in *Gothic Plays and American Society*:

> Older heroines in Gothic plays were not noted for their physical attributes, nor were they depicted as sexual beings. Whereas the young heroine could allude to the possibility of seduction, the older heroine was prevented from even contemplating such a scenario. Instead she was depicted as passionless. These heroines were depicted primarily as dutiful, loyal wives and self-sacrificing mothers, women who identified themselves only by these roles. (77)

Sexuality, in terms of its lack or presence, is a crucial barometer by which female subjectivity was assessed throughout the nineteenth century. Ideal white women relegated sexuality to the practical necessities of reproduction within heterosexual matrimony, and did not connect it in any way to desire or pleasure. In other words, the ideal white woman was asexual, not in the sense of lacking sex organs or reproducing without intercourse (although some rhetoric implies that this would have been desirable), but in the sense of being "devoid of sexuality," unaffected by attraction or desire.[18] In this way, the mother retains her purity even after the socially acceptable loss of virginity indicated by pregnancy and childbirth within the bounds of marriage. Sexual desire, not sexual activity, thus stands as the final arbiter of purity for the ideal woman. As I demonstrate below, this is a key consideration in representations of both the "fallen woman" and the interstitial virgin in Gothic plays. If we return to Lauren Berlant's notion of desire,

[18] This definition comes from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh edition.

discussed in my introduction, as a "cluster of promises" with which one cathects an object, then it is possible to argue that it is not female desire *per se* that is threatening, but the possibility of female *self-directed* desire that undermines the "cluster of promises" that patriarchy, Christianity, and capitalism colluded to formulate in this era. The man with the gumption to grab it could obtain freedom and wealth, but only if everything in his life was in order, especially the reproductive health, sexual behavior, and religious devotion of his wife and any other women in his sphere. The maternal figures abstracted as feminine perfection were tantalizing for the "cluster of promises" they represented.

If the Fetish Mother, "a public spectacle symbolizing the possibility of well-ordered human nature free from hysterical incoherence, artificial hybrids, or deformed monstrosity" (Kukla 82), is the bringer of light through the pursuit of asexual maternal duty, what Kukla terms the Unruly Mother threatens to plunge the moral world into darkness. The antithesis of the Fetish Mother, the Unruly Mother must be carefully monitored, "for her disorderly nature is always at risk of hysteria, and this hysteria is *highly contagious*—it will deform her offspring and through them transmit itself to the body politic" (Kukla 83-84) (emphasis added). In Kukla's formulation of this figure, the Unruly Mother is potentially every woman in society. The Fetish Mother is an ideal that is so abstracted as to be unattainable, whereas the Unruly Mother is the epitome of abjection lying dormant in every potentially errant womb (and, according to the rhetoric of the day, every womb was potentially errant). In popular nineteenth-century discourse, the "fallen woman" rarely starts out as such. The adjective "fallen" denotes a descent from some kind of lofty position, namely a height described by Thomas Branagan in 1808 as "a little lower than the angels, but, on account of moral evil, reduced one step below the brute, and but one above infernal spirits" (16). To frame my consideration of the "fallen angels" of Gothic plays, I

adapt Kukla's notion of the Unruly Mother, re-naming it the Anti-Mother. This small shift in nomenclature opens up the field to accommodate figures who display a femininity antithetical to ideal maternity and who may not actually be mothers (or even human), as I discuss below. The following discussion considers the Anti-Mother as she appears in Gothic plays as the unfaithful mother and the demonic witch.

The dramaturgical conventions of Gothic plays punished Anti-Mothers for their bad behavior with death, insanity, or both. Newspapers, magazines, church sermons, and novels represented a woman's disordered sexuality as directly affecting her sanity. According to historian Barbara Welter, "The frequency with which derangement follows loss of virtue suggests the exquisite sensibility of woman and the possibility that, in the women's magazines at least, her intellect was geared to her hymen, not her brain" ("Cult" 316). R. C. Maturin most infamously represents this tendency in *Bertram* (ca. 1816). In this play, which begins on a dark and stormy night, a woman's past returns to haunt her. The tragic heroine is Imogene, a married woman whose life, although forced upon her by unfortunate circumstances, is ordered and at the very least bearable. Forced to marry Lord Aldobrand because her father was ill and she had no resources to care for him, Imogene gives up her personal happiness to honor her father. In these actions, which occur before the play begins, Imogene is the picture of a dutiful wife and daughter. She tells her servant woman that despite her unhappiness at her circumstances, "I am a wretched, but a spotless wife," meaning she has stayed true in all ways to her marriage vows (Maturin 15). The return of her former lover, Bertram, who is also her husband's archenemy, disrupts this harmony. Bertram persuades Imogene to meet him privately. During their illicit meeting, the two indulge in a passionate kiss. Imogene's child enters the room shortly after, a symbol of her marital obligations whose appearance initiates Imogene's guilty descent into

madness. Bertram soon murders her husband, deepening Imogene's dilemma and causing her to lose her already fragile grip on her sanity. The concomitant guilt literally drives Imogene insane; she leaves the scene raving to herself as she stumbles without seeing through the forest, delusional and lost. She succumbs to her madness and guilt in the play's final scene, and dies.

Bertram enjoyed an intense but short-lived popularity; the pressures of religious disapproval regarding the representation of female infidelity soon removed it from the stage. A review in *The Christian Journal* targets the representation of Imogene:

> the desperate love towards such a restless, ill disposed person, in the mind of a gentle lady, unsubdued by a union with a kind and noble husband, distinguished by public fidelity and private worth, the fruit of which union was a child, the tender object of the love of both its parents, stands pretty much without defence, even at the bar of that tribunal where love holds its partial seasons. ("Bertram")

The reviewer has no sympathy for the "unsubdued" Imogene, who had everything that she should want (a husband, a child, and all the happiness implied to go along with it), and yet was not satisfied. The kiss with Bertram was one of personal sexual desire, entirely unrelated to larger social desires, revealing Imogene to be a danger to herself and others. As Branagan laments, "How great, how enormously great, must the guilt of such characters be, who take a peculiar delight to undermine the foundation of civil society [through seduction] . . . for there is a train of evils too horrid to mention connected with this crime more than any other . . ." (20). The "train of evils" unleashed by Imogene's lack of diligence includes the death of both her son and her husband; the loss of the patriarch and his heir is a symbolic dissolution of the power structure and its ability to reproduce itself.

One of the most terrifying, and most unique, representations of the Anti-Mother is the witch Saugerida, title character of *The Wood Daemon*. Unlike Imogene, who is rooted in the human realm despite the monstrosity of her actions, Saugerida is a supernatural presence. She is the ultimate incarnation of the demonic potential of feminine power to disorder all those it encounters. Saugerida's status as Anti-Mother is immediately apparent in the first scene of the play when she appears to Una in a vision that depicts "a child chained to a pillar, and the Wood Daemon, in her magic robes, holding a dagger as in the act of stabbing the child" (Turnbull 1.1.6). The fairy Auriol, who orchestrates Una's vision, intensifies this ghastly scene when she intones, "Behold! 'Tis Saugerida, the infernal Daemon of the forest, / whose dagger, insatiate as the grave, e'en now is raised to / drink the blood of youthful innocence" (7-9). Women, as mothers or mothers-to-be, were touted as the safeguards of innocence. In his advice manual, Abbott makes an observation echoed frequently in other tracts on the subject: "as the mother is the guardian and guide of the early years of life, from her goes the most powerful influence in the formation of the character of man" (2). For a woman to kill a child was the paramount of the unthinkable, as it disrupted the generation of new citizens required to fulfill the national destiny. A world in which female power extinguishes rather than promotes life exemplifies a tumultuous world in dire need of an ordering influence. Saugerida is the first popular American representation of pure feminine evil, providing the template for such figures as the witch Meg Merriles in *Guy Mannering* (1850), a role made famous by Charlotte Cushman (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Meg Merriles Charlotte Cushman as Meg Merriles in *Guy Mannering*, a popular play of the 1850s. From the Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Unlike the Fetish Mother who exemplifies a calming influence by virtue of her ordered self, Saugerida, as a demonic Anti-Mother, instills fear and chaos whenever and wherever she appears. This becomes apparent on her entrance in Act two Scene three. Before Saugerida appears, a Pageant of the Seasons is underway. Children playing the parts of the four seasons enter in a magnificent parade of decorated wagons and perform a dance, each presenting a gift to Count Canute. The content of the pageant is significant, as it represents the orderly cycles of nature in all their comforting predictability. Shortly after the conclusion of the ballet that follows the presentation of gifts to the Count, "sudden terror seizes the whole group. The servants *in wild disorder* rush into the garden" (Turnbull 2.3.13) (emphasis added). The servants saw

Saugerida offstage and come onstage to flee her demonic presence. Clotilda and Una, who also saw her offstage, enter wracked with fear. Clotilda notes, "The very sight of her, chills my blood / with horror!" (Turnbull 2.3.15-16), while Una finds herself tongue-tied: "I endeavored to speak to her, but my tongue faultered / with terror, as the hideous spectre glided through the / gallery!" (17-19). It is significant that Clotilda and Una experience paralysis and aphasia, two common symptoms of hysteria.[19] Saugerida has not only managed to deter the servants from their orderly tasks, but has disordered the other women in the vicinity, all before even entering the scene.

When Saugerida does arrive onstage, her presence is immense and horrifying. According to the stage directions, "A tall and ghastly female form rushes in, dressed in robes of deepest black, which half cover her head, and descend to her feet" (2.3.25). The cast list for the original production notes that an actor named Mr. Caulfield played the role of Saugerida. The choice of a male actor suggests that the idea was to make the figure as tall and large as possible, while also obscuring signs of traditional femininity such as breasts, slight shoulders, or any other soft features. Once she enters, "With horrid gesture she waves the Count to follow" (25). The Count conquers his terror long enough to follow Saugerida, pronouncing, "I will / follow thee, though thou shouldst conduct me to the burning / brink of that sulpherous gulph, which yawns beneath / thy cavern!" (32-35). There is perhaps an allusion here to female anatomy and the kind of fear of it that informs such myths as the *vagina dentata*.[20] In light of my argument that Gothic plays are near-allegorical rather than mimetic, this may not be too far of a stretch. Fear of the feminine, as the hysteria paradigm demonstrates, is rooted in fear of the female reproductive self, especially when the woman around the reproductive self-displays Saugerida's demonic nature. It

[19] See Showalter, *Hystories*, 15, Maines 35 and Porter 241 for lists of symptoms commonly associated with hysteria.
[20] The *vagina dentata* refers to monstrous women who have sharp teeth lining the inside of their vagina, waiting to emasculate any man who enters (Ussher 3).

is significant, also, that Una calls Saugerida "the sanguinary fiend" in the play's final scene, and that throughout the play the Count works to appease Saugerida with the blood of innocence. These details and the close but subtle similarity of the name Saugerida to "sanguinary" links the demon to blood and thus to the process of menstruation. This connection of the demonic and menstruation bespeaks the male distrust of menstruation as a polluting and disordering force. As Jane M. Ussher notes in her study *Managing the Monstrous Feminine*, "nineteenth-century psychiatrists positioned menstruation as a source of 'moral and physical derangement' . . ." (25). Saugerida, a demon appeased only by blood sacrifice, is potentially an embodiment of the association of women with blood.[21]

Where Saugerida's Anti-Mother compatriot Imogene suffered death and insanity, Saugerida undergoes neither. The second to last scene of the play features Una thwarting the Count's plan to sacrifice Leolyn, resulting in the Count himself becoming the daemon's blood sacrifice. The female threat is neutralized, but the implication is that this neutralization is temporary, as she has not been completely eliminated. Will Saugerida return to lure another vulnerable man, hungry for power, into a new Faustian pact? The question is not acknowledged by the play's ending, which seeks to emphasize only the restoration of harmony. However, the proliferation of rhetoric in the Republican era espousing the threat of the feminine and prescriptions for subduing it suggest that the true danger of the purely demonic feminine is that it is never fully vanquished.

[21] The connection of blood with errant womanhood is also present in the figure of Agnes, the ghost of a bleeding nun in *The Forest of Rosenwald; or, the Travellers Benighted* (1820) by John Stokes. In this figure is the double horror of a woman who forsook her vows of chastity and gave birth outside of marriage. Although her daughter, a virgin of the same name, is plagued by dangers set in motion by her mother's blasphemy, all turns out well in the end due to the daughter's own bravery and the timely interventions of Marguerette, the Fetish Mother of the play.

The Anti-Mothers of the Gothic plays represent femininity in its most abject and demonic forms. In her study of the history of the grotesque in Western art, Frances Connelly identifies images of the abject, monstrous, and demonic as belonging to what she calls the "traumatic grotesque." She notes, "this strand makes visual what is most threatening, inspiring fear and repulsion as it tears at the ultimate boundary between self and oblivion" (115). Given the extent to which nineteenth-century United States culture valued motherhood as intrinsic to the survival of the nation, images (even diegetic ones) of women acting on sexual desire or murdering children ("drink[ing] the blood of youthful innocence") would indeed suggest abject horrors and terrifying monsters. An aspect of abject and monstrous figures that makes them so terrifying is their association with the "dissolution of bodies," which I would argue could also be understood symbolically in terms of the social body or the body politic (Connelly 116). Abbott advises mothers, "the influence you are now exerting will go on, unchecked, by the grave or the judgment, and will extend onwards through the ages to which there is no end" (34-35). A more hyperbolic echo of this occurs in Branagan's text, wherein he warns that extramarital seduction of a virgin

> …lets loose, sends forth, constitutes and qualifies a pest, a curse, a disgrace, to society, who will in future live to ensnare and enslave others, trample upon her own character, expose her constitution, murder her soul, and at last die the victim of a fearful and fatal disorder, and a tortured mind, cursing with her last breath the murderer of her body and soul. (20-21)

Where Saugerida is a denizen of hell and walks on earth only rarely, the unfaithful wife has the potential to mingle with society, a monster hidden under a veneer of feminine beauty. The

relegation of these figures in the Gothic plays to death, insanity, or both suggests a desire to see such infectious carriers of disorder ejected from the rational, ordered community.

Where the Fetish Mother induces fascinated reverence, the Anti-Mother excites terror. As Tomkins explains, terror is a punishing affect that encourages one to avoid that which induces it. This avoidance "can readily produce free floating terror without an identifiable object, in which one wants to get away from terror before encountering more fully what it is which terrifies us" (238). In the case of the Anti-Mother, it is either her self-interested sexuality (Imogene) or her complete and utter lack of maternal instincts (Saugerida) that her expulsion from the social order avoids. In other words, representations of femininity operating somehow independently of Republican ideals threatened a terrifying rupture in the social fabric and so must somehow be banished by play's end. The dramaturgy of these plays avoided conjecturing on the impact of errant female sexuality on society by placing the errant woman outside of society. In doing so, these plays reflected a larger tendency to avoid the terror induced by the question of female sexuality by labeling it pathological, something for a gynecologist to treat. Consigning female sexual desire to the category of a disease made it something that proper medical treatment could eradicate, which included Western medicine's new practice of clitoridectomies.[22]

iii. The White Virgin and the Dramaturgy of Choice

The Fetish Mother and the Anti-Mother are, by their actions, fixed firmly in the Fetish Mother/Anti-Mother binary. This binary delineates fixed categories, putatively eliminating the threat of ambiguity. The mother is always assumed the Fetish Mother, infused with the sublime

[22] Kukla notes that while not a widespread practice, gynecologists performed clitoridectomies on American women from the early nineteenth century into the early twentieth century (100).

luminescence of her calling and humbled by the sacred responsibility of spiritual and moral leadership of the young (i.e. the reproduction of ideal citizens). Deflowered maidens and adulterous wives can only be Anti-Mothers, whose descent from their "a little less than the angels" position is actually a one-way spiraling descent into madness and death, ensuring that they are removed from a place of influence on the body politic (or at least on the upper- and middle-class portion of the body politic). The virgin, however, is neither mother nor Anti-Mother; she is undifferentiated, equally capable of becoming both, depending on the extent to which she allows her natural biological disorders to rule her. Virgins are fascinating in their near perfection, and terrifying for what that same qualifier "near" implies. They reflect fears of the disruptive potential of undifferentiated femininity to an androcentric Anglo society eager for the predictable reproduction of the Anglo social code via the predictable reproduction of ideal femininity.

While it is convenient to banish literary Anti-Mothers to the grave or the asylum, the impact of feminine misbehavior or wickedness on a real family or society is not so simple. For a family to lose its virginal daughter to seduction or suffer the stain of an unfaithful wife and mother would taint the family, moving it down in the social order. On a large scale, if enough women follow the path of the Anti-Mother, society cannot reproduce itself in the manner that the patriarchal structure desires. The white virgin reifies the question of a national future depending on woman's attainment and emulation of ideal femininity. The white virgin is the third-term figure between the Fetish Mother and the Anti-Mother, and the dramaturgical center of most Gothic plays of the Republican era. That the conflict which so intimately involves virgins in the plays' plots often results from masculine misbehavior or weakness is crucial to the theatrical development of this character, as is the centrality of both the virgin and the villain to the scenes

involving the most thrilling (and, for theatrical producers, the most expensive) moments of spectacle. While nearly every Gothic play features the virgin archetype, I focus below on *Fontainville Abbey* and *Bluebeard; or, Female Curiosity* (1802) by William Dunlap and *The Wood Daemon* by John Turnbull. *Fontainville Abbey* was the first original Gothic play by an American, and so stands as an important precedent. Both *The Wood Daemon* and *Bluebeard* enjoyed great popularity, resulting in multiple performances in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Their popularity suggests general approval of the characters and morals of the plays, making them worthwhile objects of analysis for my purposes of understanding the white virgin as an important trope of interstitial femininity.

In the 1800s, virginity was both a spiritual and a material commodity. Christianity elided sexual purity with spiritual purity, and it was the maintenance of both which kept white women's social position so lofty. This was especially true in the midst of the Second Great Awakening, when purity and piety became so closely allied (Price 916). Connected to its moral significance was the treatment of sexual purity as a commodity, the quality of which determined a woman's matrimonial prospects. According to Anthony, "Audiences of this time would have understood the importance of virginity to an unmarried girl. . . . A woman needed to retain an 'unsullied purity' in order to compete on the marriage market; her virginity was considered an 'indispensable asset'" (71-72). The majority of women in the early 1800s, as high as 90%, did marry. "Indeed," Welter comments, "the American girl did not know what happiness was unless she saw it in middle-class life as wife and mother" (*Dimity* 9). Gayle Rubin, in "The Traffic in Women," argues that the marriage transaction was one between men, not between a man and a woman, even though the woman's virginity is the primary unit of currency in the transaction.[23]

[23] See "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (2011).

Following this understanding of marriages that require virginity as dowry, representations of virginity are also representations of transactions between men (or anxious representations of the possibility of the transaction's failure). The variable in the transaction is the woman; her viability as domestic partner helps ensure the proper ordering of the man's public realm, and her eligibility for this life is her virginity before marriage. Where mothers reproduce citizens, virgins reproduce the possibility for the marriage transaction. Without enough virgins, there will ultimately not be enough mothers.

Anthony describes virginal heroines of Gothic plays in the following terms:

> Young, unmarried heroines in Gothic plays exhibited deference toward males as well as dependence when they were not forced by circumstances to act assertively. These heroines were modest, pious, demure, and virtuous. They exhibited no sign of wit or humor; they appeared completely passionless, and they worried excessively about preserving their virtue. (75)

Although the above description is largely accurate, I challenge Anthony's summary here on two points. First, I find fault with the adjective "demure." While this designation may be unreservedly attributed to the white virgin of antebellum melodramas, what makes the Republican virgin heroines so striking is that they are demure, but only imperfectly so. The dictionary definition of demure is "reserved, modest." While the virgin heroines certainly show deference to their elders, and so are demure in that sense, they are not reserved. Anthony does note that they can act assertively when "forced by circumstances," but, looking closely at the plays, one perceives that hints of rebellion color each character even when she or those close to her are not under immediate threat. For example, in *Fontainville Abbey*, the virgin Adeline explains that one reason she gives for her father's anger is that she refused to become a nun

(Dunlap, *Fontainville* 2.1.52-102). While this event happens before the action of the play and makes sense or is even admirable from within a social matrix that values reproduction (as a nun Adeline would not have had children), this is still a distinct example of feminine defiance of masculine authority.

Anthony's attribution of "demure" is perhaps exaggerated, as is the extent to which the virgins "exhibit deference towards males." I have already discussed how, in choosing not to become a nun, Adeline, although arguably the demurest of my examples, disregards the wishes of a major male authority figure in her life. Fatima's total deference in *Bluebeard* is questionable as well. The play opens with Fatima's lover, Selim, scaling the tower where Fatima lives in order, presumably, to take her away with him.[24] Already Fatima displays a certain degree of disobedience. Almost immediately, her father enters and informs her that he recently promised Fatima to Abomelique (the eponymous Bluebeard). Far from subserviently bending to her father Ibrahim's wishes, Fatima protests against this decision. She even addresses herself directly to Abomelique, a powerful and imposing man, saying to him "Our hopes and joys were ripening daily; you / came and all are blighted!" (*Bluebeard* 1.1:194-195). When it is time to leave, Fatima physically resists and Abomelique has to force her into the carriage. Some virgin characters, such as Una in *The Wood Daemon*, have no male authority figures to whom to defer, except for the villains, against whom it becomes necessary to rebel for the sake of fighting their villainy. Una depends on women to provide guidance, but even so must ultimately make her own choices. Again, all of these characters are cast in the same basic mold of obedient

[24] The reader may note that the names of the characters in *Bluebeard* are markedly non-European or non-western. The story takes place in Turkey and features Muslim characters. Given this, the story's virgin, Fatima, should perhaps differ from the other characters. Like other Orientalist works, however, *Bluebeard* coopts the exotic dress and locale of its setting but does not accurately portray the actual culture it represents. Instead, as I demonstrate, Fatima exhibits the flaws and virtues of white virgins. I argue that this familiar representation of ideal feminine morality accounts at least in part for the play's enormous success in the nineteenth century.

unmarried white women, but they often exceed the mold in order to stand up for themselves, which contributes meaningfully to the plot. Their occasional choice to disregard, even defy, male authority also heightens or provokes moments of danger, a scenario that is also central to the dramaturgy of Gothic plays.

I bring up these points not to quibble with Anthony's semantics but to emphasize that these women, though extremely close to the ideal femininity embodied in the Fetish Mother archetypes, are just *im*perfect enough to make the outcome of the play's action tantalizingly unsure. They *ought* to be demure and unquestionably obedient to masculine authority, but often they are not, and it is often in these moments of deviation from the norm that climactic events arise. My challenge to Anthony introduces the important consideration that the dramaturgical conventions of Gothic plays position feminine choice as the determining factor of the drama, including how the main characters are positioned as imperfect (if only slightly so in the case of the virgins) and the close relationship between spectacle, endangered femininity, and feminine agency. The interstitial identity of the virgins implies that their choices are not as determined as Fetish Mothers or Anti-Mothers. Villainous threats to the virgins' safety and sexual purity combined with unreliable heroes creates situations that force these women to act in order to protect themselves. Risk, danger, and the spectacular effects they promote both motivate and frame the choices made by brave but desperate women. This emphasis on female-directed resolution, and the uncertainty of its outcome, connects directly to the masculine ambivalence toward the feminine. In the case of the virgin, for example, distress regarding whether the women who are responsible for reproducing ideal citizens can ultimately overcome the pathological shortcomings of their hysterically inclined bodies is echoed in the scenes of danger that solicit their most morally crucial decisions at climactic moments in the play. The discussion

of feminine agency in the following section is also important to the remaining chapters of this dissertation. In all of the theatricalized femininities discussed throughout my project, interstitial feminine agency (or its circumscription) acts as a common thread between the plays. As I show, however, the circumstances necessitating this agency vary depending on the political and ideological issues the agency reifies, making the actions of each feminine figure specific to the historical pressures informing its representation.

In Gothic plays, the endangerment of virgin characters is intrinsic to the plot and resolution of the plays. Adeline, for example, is present in the play because circumstances threaten her life before the play's action even begins. Although the audience is immediately aware of it, Fatima's life is in danger from the moment her father betroths her to Bluebeard. The very first scene of *The Wood Daemon* depicts the sleeping Una seeing, in a dream, Saugerida about to murder a child. The fairy Auriol who shows Una the vision intones to her, "Thou, fair maid, the fates decree, from consinement to release the trembling captive, and to preserve his life!" (1.1: 10-12). From the very first, Una's fate seems tied to a confrontation with an obviously dangerous enemy.

Auriol's line suggests another aspect of the virgin's involvement in the plot, which is the centrality of their connection to the reproductive order. To charge Una with "releas[ing] the trembling captive and preserv[ing] his life" is akin to asking her to release a child from her womb and then rear it. For her part, Adeline's decision to join the reproductive order by refusing to become a nun is what sets the plot in motion. In Fatima's case, her father Ibrahim essentially sells her into a marriage for money and power, whereas she desires a marriage based on love, morality, and the simple domesticity associated with an ideal Christian wife. All of these women ultimately act in ways that allow them to either preserve the sanctity of marriage or perpetuate

the right kind of reproduction. Their ability to do this is closely dependent on their ability to retain their sexual purity. Of all the heroines under review, Adeline's purity is the most emphasized. Out of modesty she cannot comment on it much herself, but others communicate it through their words. When, for example, Adeline relates her nightmare to Madame La Motte, Madame replies, "Sweet maid! they were strong terrors that could shake / The confidence of purity like thine: / For of thy innocence no doubt have I…" (Dunlap, *Fontainville* 2.1.39-41). The fact of her residence in a convent until just a day or so before her return to her guardian's house and her subsequent rescue hours later implies her purity. Finally, her purity is expressed by the terms of endearment attributed to her, such as when Madame La Motte refers to her as "angel-maid" and the note that turns out to be from her mother calls her "little cherub." Una and Fatima's virginal purity is mostly implied, assumed in their status as unmarried and in their tendency to behave virtuously in nearly all situations. I say *nearly* all, because, as I discuss below, it is in the moments of deviation from the ideal pure and innocent virgin that some of the most exciting (and distressing) moments of the plays develop.

Threats against virginal purity are a major dramaturgical convention of Gothic plays. There is a close relationship in the plays to the threat of the power of female sexuality and the danger of feminine agency. Although ostensibly not in their control, the effect of the women's physical allure is generally communicated in terms that suggest that their personal volition is in some way behind it. The Marquis de Montalt, for example, says of Adeline, "this girl has quite bewitch'd me" (Dunlap, *Fontainville* 3.1.248). In *The Wood Daemon,* Count Canute succumbs to a brief fit of jealousy when he thinks Una has met with her former fiancée. He recovers then apologizes, "Forgive me Una if I have wronged thee—'twas through the excess of love" (Turnbull 2.1.65-66). That Canute's "love" for Una is closer to lust is evident in his tendency to

treat her as one of his many possessions; his attempt to sacrifice her to sate the Daemon at the end of the play attests to his view of her as disposable. His many remarks about her beauty and fine form imply that Una's physical appeal is the source of his "love."

The threat of feminine agency, namely, the capacity to determine one's own actions, mirrored, I argue, the masculine distress regarding whether women would ultimately be able to live up to the task of citizen-production entailed to them. That women are their own greatest threat appears time and again in Gothic plays. In some plays, the threat that the virgin poses to herself is subtle, as is the case with Adeline. The primary way in which Adeline endangers herself is through the choices she makes to leave the safety of her room and wander the dark halls of the crumbling abbey on her own. This happens twice, and both times, it is Madame La Motte who discovers her absence. The first instance is benign. Madame La Motte comes early in the morning to Adeline's room and finds her gone, but Adeline enters soon after, explaining that she took an early walk in the fresh air to clear the cobwebs of nightmares that plagued her the night before. She explains, "Soon as I laid me down, strange dreams assail'd, / Repelling rest, racking my mind to frenzy" (Dunlap, *Fontainville* 2.1.35-36). It is the force of what Adeline imagines that drives her choice in this instance, suggesting that her own overactive mind is partially at fault for her questionable choice. Adeline's first deviant act of solo wandering does not lead to danger; it only excites minor alarm in Madame La Motte. However, there is an implication of the potentially disordering effect of independent female choice. The second time Madame La Motte discovers Adeline is missing from her room is not so benign. As it connects very intimately to the discussion of danger and spectacle, I will elaborate more on this instance below. Common to both instances, however, is that these bouts of independent wandering invite danger and cause anxiety to those who care for Adeline.

As the subtitle implies, *Bluebeard; or, Female Curiosity* is a play about how women's choices (or disobedience through curiosity) endanger men as well as women. As many audience members might have known because of the popularity of the fairy tale that forms the play's plot, Abomelique executed his many previous wives because of their inability to resist their own curiosity. Abomelique allows each wife full access to every room in the castle, save one—the Blue Chamber. Abomelique judges his wives' worthiness by this test. Prompted by a prophecy that foretells that his wife's curiosity will lead to his death, Abomelique brutally murders any woman who disobeys his edict not to trespass into the Blue Chamber. Fatima, who already implied her potential imperfection by not going demurely with Abomelique in the first place, puts herself in danger when she allows her sister Irene (another virginal character, and a very willful one) to persuade her to violate Abomelique's edict. In other words, Fatima chooses to give in to the negative influences of the willful woman with whom she keeps company. It is significant that Irene is enamored with Abomelique's wealth and power, just as Fatima's father Ibrahim is; among the many things said to threaten women's ability to maintain their purity and not endanger their offspring with negative influences was the pleasure and wealth available in urban culture. William Buchan, for example, in his *Advice to Mothers,* warns that women in London who participated in the fashion of wearing corsets gave birth to daughters born without nipples; in this way, their daughters "bear the marks of a mother's impudence" (Buchan 10). Feminine choice influenced by the temptation of negative outside influences imperils a mother's purity, which imperils their offspring and, from there, the health of the nation.

Feminine choice also functions as dramaturgical focus in *The Wood Daemon.* Despite the attribution of "fair maid" given to Una in the first few lines of the play, the audience quickly learns that Una may be slightly less than purely virtuous. This becomes apparent when Clotilda,

her aunt, enters and with barely any preamble demands of Una, "tell me, have you seriously reflected on / your conduct to Oswy, your betrothed husband?" (Turnbull 1.1.94-95). Una, it seems, freely chose to forsake her promise to Oswy, a peasant, in favor of the offer of marriage from the wealthy and powerful Count Canute. The excuse she offers for her betrayal is anything but demure: "Certainly I love Oswy, but cannot / think of being the wife of a poor peasant—I feel that / greatness seems to agree with my constitution, and really begin / to think I was born to be a Countess" (99-102). Una is in danger of succumbing to the same lure of wealth and power that have Ibrahim and Irene under its spell in *Bluebeard*. The following lines, in which she appears to be convincing herself of her own moral rightness, imply that Una knows her actions are not entirely virtuous: "Oswy, you know, never saved / my life, and the Count did; so it's out of gratitude to the / Count; yes out of gratitude, pure gratitude, nothing but / gratitude I assure you; --besides, the Count's gallantry; he / relieves the heart from the sense of obligation" (146-150). Clotilda replies by calling Una "false" and "deluded," neither of which are desired terms for a paragon of ideal womanhood. The question of whether Una will choose to see through her own self-willed blindness and admit both the Count's perfidy, and her own immorality in abetting him by allying with him through marriage, is a question undergirding the whole of the play.

The concept of choice, especially free choice, had a particular resonance in the Republican United States, which was itself an experiment in democratic government ostensibly predicated on the freedom of choice in the democratic process. Freedom and its meaning was a vital and contested topic in this era. Freedom in the early United Sates was not viewed as freedom to choose anything one's heart desired, but freedom to choose in such a way that denotes what Beabout, after Kierkegaard, calls "the freedom of right relation" (154). Beabout's

term derives from his analysis of Kierkegaard's theories in such works as *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844). Kierkegaard writes that anxiety is an *a priori* aspect of human existence, as humans have free will (in the biblical sense) and so are equally capable of choosing anything. Freedom, according to Kierkegaard, is relational, not individual. Beabout notes that part of this determination comes from the fact that "The primary etymological sense of the term 'free' is 'dear, beloved.' . . . A free person is a friend or beloved, one joined to another in mutual benevolence and intimacy" (153). In this sense, the root meaning of freedom includes the concept of love and devotion *to a beloved*, namely one to whom one is devoted *outside one's self*. Beabout continues, "The devotion to the beloved is itself freedom, that is, the freedom of right relation" (154). In the advice manuals cited throughout this chapter, women prove their devotion to their families by exercising their freedom of choice in ways that serve a national agenda, or, in other words, that puts them in "right relation" to the rest of their society (which always, as Kierkegaard emphasizes, includes a Christian God). To choose solely based on one's personal desires or to guard one's self from danger at the expense of an innocent life would be a violation of the kind of freedom informing American democracy in its early days. Beabout describes it in the following terms:

> The Enlightenment promise of freedom continues to issue a soft sweet smell, for freedom still carries with it the hidden sense of loving devotion. The land of the free is originally thought to be simultaneous with the land flowing with milk and honey, a land where individuals live in right relation with themselves and with God. (154).

In later melodramas, white heroes relieve white virgin women of the weight of upholding the "right" kind of social and spiritual relations. In Gothic plays, however, this task lies on the virgin's shoulders.[25]

iv. Masculine Malfeasance and the Dramaturgy of Choice

Villains in Gothic plays (and most melodramatic genres) exercise agency in a way diametrically opposed to the above formulation of freedom of choice as living in right relation. For villains, choices are never made in relation to anyone else's well-being, only the villain's self-interest. This is what Beabout describes as choice "disassociated from goodness" and made synonymous only with itself (154). Besides posing a threat to itself, feminine purity and safety is also always threatened by villainous men and their perfidious intentions to disrupt the rightful reproductive and domestic order. If women side with the villains, they choose to reproduce the villains' anti-social values. Watching the Gothic women work against this self-interest describes the basic plot of most of these dramas. In *Fontainville Abbey,* masculine menace stalks Adeline from the time she leaves the convent to almost the end of the play. She even comments on this upon learning of the villain Marquis' evil plan and La Motte's collusion in it: "Where shall Innocence / Now seek for refuge? Betrayers dog her steps, / Men hunt her down, and there is none to help her" (Dunlap, *Fontainville* 3.1: 234-237). Her first encounter with men upon leaving the convent foreshadows the masculine menace she will encounter throughout the play.

[25] One reason for the shift toward white male heroics later in the century, I argue, is that by the 1830s the "distress of independence" was replaced by other pressures, such as the "distress of conquest" (see chapter two) and the "distress of citizenship" (see chapter three) precipitated by the exigencies of Manifest Destiny and slavery in a free republic, respectively. Once America's uncertain beginnings become more solid, white femininity becomes less of a threat and more of a stable institution.

When she arrives at her putative father's home, she does not find the shining oasis of domestic bliss she imagines. Completely lacking in feminine warmth, the house is instead a haven for malicious men. Adeline describes this scene to Madame La Motte:

> None met my eye but men of savage look,
> Who view'd me wondering but nor word nor smile
> Gave token of humanity. I spoke;
> 'Twas vain; none heeded me. Lock'd in a room,
> In horrible suspence the day I pass'd
> Night came—O night of horrors! Then my father
> Entering the room, where stretch'd upon the bed
> I weeping lay, fearing I know not what;
> The candle which he bore show'd me his face
> Pallid and fiend-like; in his hand—Oh! 'tis too much for memory—now I see
> him! [*Covers her eyes, wildly*]. (Dunlap, *Fontainville* 2.1: 88-97)

At this point Madame La Motte enjoins Adeline to calm down. What is significant in this moment is that not only are men threatening the well-being of the virgin, whom they should protect, but the fear they instill disorders Adeline emotionally, apparent in her fear and panic.

Although featuring fewer male miscreants than *Fontainville Abbey*, the play *Bluebeard* is a prime example of the threat masculine malfeasance poses to feminine purity. Abomelique is the clear villain of this play. Irene remarks that his villainy is literally apparent on his face, because of his blue beard, which she conjectures "was sent as a punishment to him, / on account of all his unfortunate wives" (Dunlap, *Bluebeard* 1.1.101-102). Abomelique does not consider himself as culpable as Irene does. Instead, Abomelique sees himself acting in self-defense. As

he says to his servant Shacabac in a grisly pun regarding his murdered wives, "'Twas to prevent the harm with which their / conduct threaten'd me, that they have suffered. Their / crimes were on their heads" (Dunlap, *Bluebeard* 2.2.16-18).[26] In fact, the wives' only crimes were unwittingly to threaten the fulfillment of the prophecy given to Abomelique that he must wed and that his wife's curiosity will be the cause of his death. This prophecy has great weight for Abomelique, who owes his power and influence to the spells he cast to ensure his immortality. The audience learns that Abomelique enchanted a skeleton that either is or stands in for death. Abomelique describes this creature in the following speech, revealing the simultaneous awe, fear, and disdain he feels for it:

> Henceforward he must be my destiny. Demon
> of blood! death's courier! —whose sport it is
> to sound war's clarion; to whet the knife of suicide; to
> lead the hired murderer to the sleeping babe; and, with
> a ghastly smile of triumph, to register the slaughter'd
> who prematurely drop in nature's charnel-house—in
> yon dire habitation [the Blue Chamber] have I pent him; --a prisoner to my
> art, there, to circumscribe his general purposes *for my*
> *particular good*, twelve winters have I kept him! (2.2.59-67) (emphasis added)

As long as the skeleton occupies the Blue Chamber and a magic dagger "remains beneath the foot of that same ghastly form," Abomelique is "free from mortal power" (73-76). Ironically, Abomelique cannot place the dagger in the chamber himself; he requires someone to help him

[26] The convention of male antagonists exerting fatal influences on female protagonists is not unique to Gothic plays. Precedence exists in such notable plays as Aeschylus' entire *Oresteia* trilogy, Iphigenia *at Aulis* by Euripides, Sophocles' *Antigone*, and William Shakespeare's *Othello, the Moor of Venice*.

achieve "his own particular good." Abomelique's primary crimes seem to be an endless appetite for wealth and power, arrogance regarding his high station, and a total and complete lack of respect for individual human lives. Fatima comments on this to Irene, saying "Wealth, when purpose is perverted, makes the possessor odious. When virtuous men have gold, they purchase their own happiness by making others happy; heap treasure on the vicious, they strengthen their injustice with the sweet means of charity, and turn the poor man's blessing to a curse" (Dunlap, *Bluebeard* 2.2.132-138). What Fatima describes is Abomelique's inability to live in "right relation" to his community, a handicap he owes to his avarice and narcissism. This same narcissism eventually causes Fatima to have to choose whether to obey an evil husband or defy him to save her own life.

Count Canute represents the influence of masculine malfeasance on feminine choice in *The Wood Daemon*. Similar to Abomelique, Count Canute allies himself with dark magic for the sake of wealth and power.[27] Added to these crimes is the sin of vanity, as the audience learns that it was also to change his physical appearance that the Count entered into a blood pact with Saugerida. He tells the story in a soliloquy in Act three Scene two:

> At how terrible a ransom have I pledged my soul to
> redeem it from disgrace! Better had it been, had I still remained
> in my original crust of deformity, the monster
> nature made me, than to be transformed at such a price of
> crime to what I am! For then, though destitute of the
> semblance of humanity, I was most happy. –Accursed ambition,
> with *her* harlot smile, first tempted me to make that

[27] Precedence for this plot convention exists also, in such works as William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

dreadful bond. —Now I am a prince—blest with opulence

—invested with power—beloved by everyone, and am

—the wretch I ought to be. (Turnbull 3.2.131-140) (emphasis added)

While the Count's laments may make it appear as if he regrets his choices, his actions in the last scene of the play contradict these words. When given the choice of sacrificing himself or Una to Saugerida, he chooses Una, despite earlier protestations that he would do anything for love of her.

The implication of these examples of masculine malfeasance is that women are not always completely responsible for their own hysteria; hence, women themselves cannot be solely blamed for disrupting the reproductive order. This suggests that woman's fate is not only personal but communal. However, in the Gothic plays, the responsibility and burden of defeating evil still almost always comes down to women making the right choices at the right time. As the heroes of melodrama gain more presence and utility in later plays, it is white masculine order that combats masculine disorder to ensure white feminine order. At this point, however, the convention in Gothic plays is that the actions of the virgins are what allow everything to resolve happily, making female choice the greatest single factor despite the level of influence that men have on the plot. This invests the virgin with an enormous responsibility, but also a great deal of power. The question is always, of course, whether she will find the strength to wield that power in a way that benefits herself as well as society.

iv. Spectacle and the White Virgin: Pleasure and/in Peril

In Gothic plays, spectacle and female endangerment are familiar bedfellows. The technology of spectacle was not as advanced in the Gothic plays as it would be by the time Dion Boucicault sets fire to a ferry in the climax of *The Octoroon* in 1859; nevertheless, the focus on spectacle in Gothic drama laid the foundation for such advanced spectacle, as well as answering the needs of its audiences to find alleviation from distress through highly ritualized and formulaic plots enhanced by fantastic spectacle. Gothic plays, in their most spectacular moments, are also their most fantastic, most distressing and, ultimately most reliable in their outcomes.

Gothic plays, with their investment in *mises en scenes* that are other-worldly, ominous, decayed, removed from quotidian daily life, and eerily out of sorts, rely on spectacle from the outset. *Fontainville Abbey*, written in 1795, is one of the earliest examples of a Gothic play imagined by an American playwright. Given its early conception it also may have helped solidify the conventions of story and spectacle upon which other American Gothic plays capitalized. Claps of thunder, eerie moans and whispers, shadowy stone halls, flickering candle light, and mysterious relics hidden amidst the cobwebs of the abandoned abbey all work to create an enthralling milieu distanced from the audience only by the depth of the proscenium. Also probably due to its early production, much of the spectacle in *Fontainville Abbey* is communicated through verbal description (diagetically) or by sound rather than visual spectacle. An example that combines both is Madame La Motte's description of the abbey at night: "How hollow howls the wind among yon turrets! / Now the blast sighs, and, with a dying sound, / Moans mournfully along the narrow aisles" (Dunlap 3.1: 24-27). While it lacks some of the

more ostentatiously fantastic elements of *The Wood Daemon* and *Bluebeard*, *Fontainville Abbey* shares with its fellow Gothic plays the convention of using the moments of highest spectacle to accompany moments of highest danger.

Like other plays, the most significant example of spectacular danger in *Fontainville Abbey* comes late in the play. This is because it is usually around Act three that the action intensifies towards its climactic resolution, which is also often the scene of highest spectacle. While this example of spectacle does not occur in the play's climax, it does frame a crucial decision on Adeline's part that leads to the play's resolution later in the act. The opening of Act three begins in "A dark and antique apartment. Adeline enters, with a light in one hand, in the other, a rusty dagger, at which she gazes earnestly" (3.1.1). To accompany the appearance of an unaccompanied (and so unprotected) Adeline is the diagetic spectacle of her reaction to her environment. Ostensibly speaking to herself, Adeline comments, "Yes, cursed instrument! [the rusty dagger] my heart shrinks from thee, / The whilst my hand with terror's impulse grasps thee. / Why do I wander thus through these abodes / Of guilt, these cavern'd hiding holes of blackest horror?" (1-4). Adeline's inner monologue compliments the dour and dilapidated scene, showing her to be in a perilous space. Her fear almost overwhelms her until she sees an ancient chest: "After hesitating, she opens it as with a desperate effort; starts from it with horror. The lid falls; a shelf and ruins are thrown down; among the ruins is a parchment roll" (11). One can imagine the sound such a scene change would create on stage, along with the pleasure of seeing such a clever bit of transformation. In the midst of this frightening occurrence, Adeline finds she does not faint or shrink with horror. Wondering at this, she concludes, "Undaunted innocence walks firmly on, / Though death's deep shadows lengthen at each step" (15-16). Her innocence protects her even as it makes her vulnerable, a complex ontology that speaks to the ambivalent

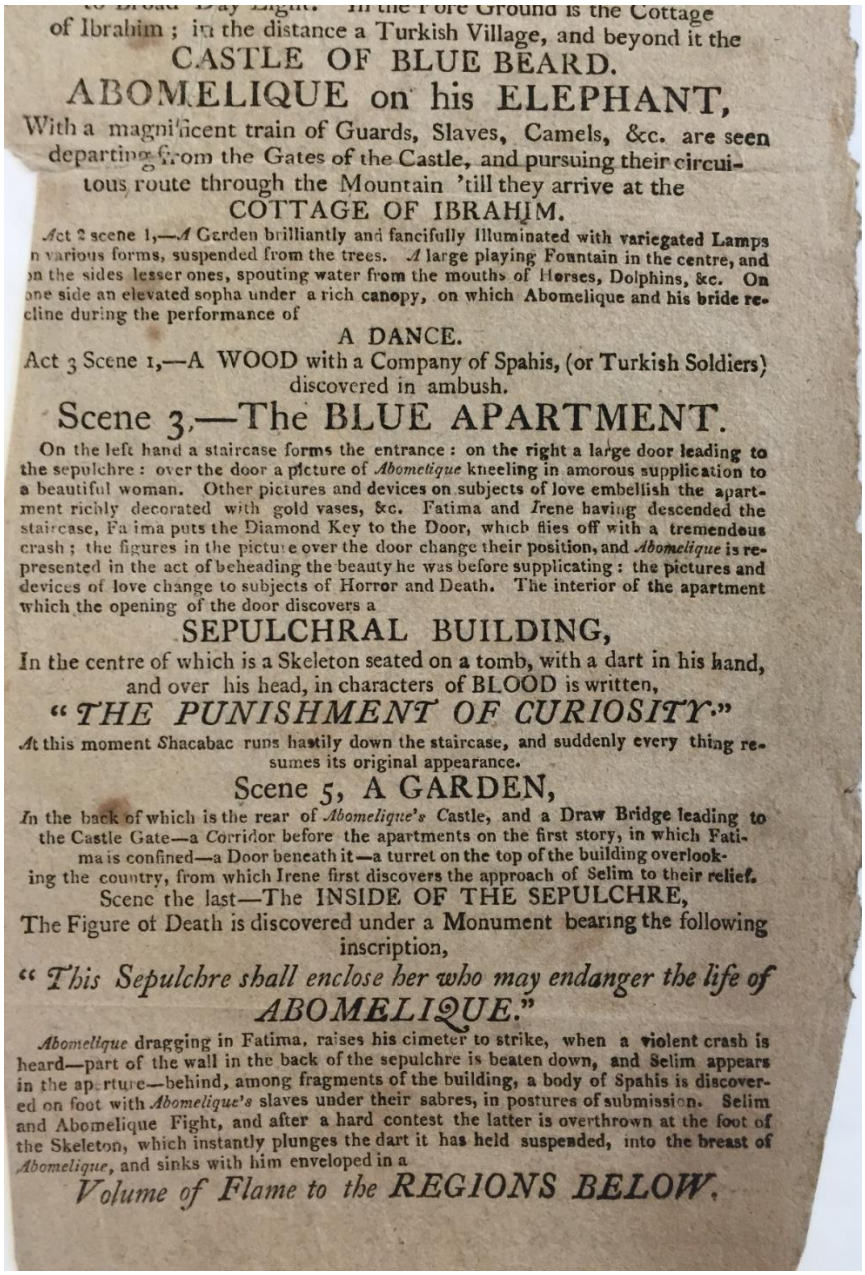
figure of the virgin in general. Adeline sees the parchment, thinks it is a clue to the abbey's dark history (which it is), and takes it. Before leaving she provides the audience with one last image to further emphasize the threatening nature of her surroundings: "I'm chill'd—whether the ague of the mind, / Or body's sufferance from this stagnant air, / I know not" (Dunlap, *Fontainville* 3.1.20-22). Adeline then exits, perhaps succumbing to a shiver of cold before going out of sight.

Although both achieve similar effects, the lavish use of spectacle in *Bluebeard* far surpasses the primarily verbal description of horrific scenes in *Fontainville Abbey*. Everywhere in *Bluebeard* spectacle communicates the scope of the male protagonist's power and its gruesome consequences. At first this seems harmless, if overly ostentatious, such as the huge parade that accompanies his arrival in the village. The stage directions denote that his train is seen arriving in the distance. It winds its way closer, with the carts, people, and animals in the parade growing larger as they approach. This suggests complex scenography at work to manipulate perspective so effectively. Abomelique's castle is itself an opulent spectacle with elaborate grounds. The centerpiece of spectacle in this drama is, however, the Blue Chamber, in which Abomelique holds death imprisoned and secrets away his wives' remains. Not meant for public view, its grandness is in its depravity and gore. The following description appears on a playbill for a performance of the play in 1812 (see Figure 1.2 for a photograph of the original playbill):

> On the left hand a staircase on the entrance, on the right a large door leading to the sepulcher; over the door a picture of Abomelique kneeling in amorous supplication to a beautiful woman. Fatima and Irene have descended the staircase, Fatima puts the Diamond Key to the Door, which flies off with a tremendous crash; the figures in the picture over the door change their position,

> and Abomelique is represented in the act of beheading the beauty he was before supplicating: the pictures and devices of love change to subjects of Horror and Death. The interior of the apartment opens to discover the Sepulchral Building, in the center of which is a Skeleton seated on a tomb, with a dagger in his hand, and over his head, in characters of BLOOD written, "The Punishment of Curiosity."

The Blue Chamber appears twice—first when Fatima opens the door with the key, and then when Abomelique takes Fatima there to behead her. It is on this second visit to the Chamber that the play's climax occurs. Just as Abomelique is on the point of beheading Fatima, she hears her lover Selim approaching with his fellow soldiers. Emboldened by this, Fatima "struggles with Abomelique, who attempts to kill her" (Dunlap, *Bluebeard* 3.3.66). It is significant that Fatima initiated this fight rather than waiting for Selim to actually enter the room and fight Abomelique himself, because in doing so, she sets up the circumstances that lead to Abomelique's defeat. As she struggles against him, Fatima "snatches the dagger from the pedestal of the skeleton." The dagger was keeping the skeleton captive. With its removal, "the skeleton rises on his feet—lifts his arm which holds the dart, and keeps it suspended" (66). At this moment, Selim literally breaks down the wall to the chamber and he and Abomelique engage in a brief sword fight. Selim easily disarms Abomelique and causes him to fall in the path of the skeleton. The skeleton then stabs Abomelique in the heart, "and sinks with him beneath the earth. A volume of flames arises, and the earth closes" (Dunlap, *Bluebeard* 3.3.70). Although Selim appears to have saved the day, it was truly Fatima's actions in the Blue Chamber that led to Abomelique's undoing. This ultimately ensured that she lived to marry her rightful love, correctly inscribing herself into the reproductive order by virtue of her own bravery.



of Ibrahim ; in the distance a Turkish Village, and beyond it the
CASTLE OF BLUE BEARD.
ABOMELIQUE on his ELEPHANT,
With a magnificent train of Guards, Slaves, Camels, &c. are seen departing from the Gates of the Castle, and pursuing their circuitous route through the Mountain 'till they arrive at the
COTTAGE OF IBRAHIM.
Act 2 scene 1,—A Garden brilliantly and fancifully Illuminated with variegated Lamps in various forms, suspended from the trees. A large playing Fountain in the centre, and on the sides lesser ones, spouting water from the mouths of Horses, Dolphins, &c. On one side an elevated sopha under a rich canopy, on which Abomelique and his bride recline during the performance of
A DANCE.
Act 3 Scene 1,—A WOOD with a Company of Spahis, (or Turkish Soldiers) discovered in ambush.
Scene 3,—The BLUE APARTMENT.
On the left hand a staircase forms the entrance : on the right a large door leading to the sepulchre : over the door a picture of *Abomelique* kneeling in amorous supplication to a beautiful woman. Other pictures and devices on subjects of love embellish the apartment richly decorated with gold vases, &c. Fatima and Irene having descended the staircase, Fatima puts the Diamond Key to the Door, which flies off with a tremendous crash ; the figures in the picture over the door change their position, and *Abomelique* is represented in the act of beheading the beauty he was before supplicating : the pictures and devices of love change to subjects of Horror and Death. The interior of the apartment which the opening of the door discovers a
SEPULCHRAL BUILDING,
In the centre of which is a Skeleton seated on a tomb, with a dart in his hand, and over his head, in characters of BLOOD is written,
"*THE PUNISHMENT OF CURIOSITY.*"
At this moment Shacabac runs hastily down the staircase, and suddenly every thing resumes its original appearance.
Scene 5, A GARDEN,
In the back of which is the rear of *Abomelique's* Castle, and a Draw Bridge leading to the Castle Gate—a Corridor before the apartments on the first story, in which Fatima is confined—a Door beneath it—a turret on the top of the building overlooking the country, from which Irene first discovers the approach of Selim to their relief.
Scene the last—The INSIDE OF THE SEPULCHRE,
The Figure of Death is discovered under a Monument bearing the following inscription,
"*This Sepulchre shall enclose her who may endanger the life of ABOMELIQUE.*"
Abomelique dragging in Fatima, raises his cimeter to strike, when a violent crash is heard—part of the wall in the back of the sepulchre is beaten down, and Selim appears in the aperture—behind, among fragments of the building, a body of Spahis is discovered on foot with *Abomelique's* slaves under their sabres, in postures of submission. Selim and Abomelique Fight, and after a hard contest the latter is overthrown at the foot of the Skeleton, which instantly plunges the dart it has held suspended, into the breast of *Abomelique*, and sinks with him enveloped in a
Volume of Flame to the REGIONS BELOW.

Figure 1.2 *Bluebeard* Playbill 1812 The above description of the Blue Chamber appears here, as well as that of other spectacular elements. From the Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Spectacle in *The Wood Daemon*, while also used to highlight Saugerida's exquisite monstrosity, also works to highlight the simultaneous vulnerability and strength of the interstitial virgin. This is evident in the final scenes of the play when a clock strikes regularly, moving inexorably towards one o'clock, the preordained hour of the blood sacrifice to Saugerida. As the

clock strikes twelve, "a full Symphony of celestial Music is heard—The chamber becomes illuminated" (Turnbull 3.2.122). At this moment, Una, who is in the chamber that leads to the Mystic Cavern, finally accepts that the Count is not the hero she believed him to be and searches for the entrance to where the Count took Leolyn. At the final clock strike, the ghosts of Count Ruric and Lady Alexina, Leolyn's murdered parents, appear and point the way for Una. She exclaims, "Now, Leolyn! I fly to rescue thee, or perish in the attempt!" (122-123). The aural and visual spectacle of the ghosts appears just as Una decides to dedicate her efforts to preserving the rightful male line, setting herself in right relation to her community.

The climax of *The Wood Daemon* occurs in the Mystic Cavern, a space akin to Abomelique's Blue Chamber in that it is a hidden room dedicated to the dark doings of a dastardly villain. The stage directions describe the Cavern in the following way: "In the center stands an altar, with a dagger on it.—On the left hand is a pillar, covered with cabalistic characters.—On the right hand the figure of a giant, holding a clock in his arms—the hands of which point the hour to be half past twelve" (3.3.1). The scene opens with Leolyn chained to the pillar. Una, having procured the key through an earlier act of bravery, immediately releases Leolyn and directs him to hide. The Count enters and, on seeing Leolyn gone, resolves to sacrifice Una in his place. Her dedication to virtue has endangered her own life. In this moment of her greatest peril, Una thinks of her former fiancée and true love, Oswy. She laments, "Oswy! beloved Oswy! now thou art amply revenged for my unheeding perfidy, and cold ingratitude to thee!" (3.3.78-80). It seems, briefly, that all is lost and Una will be sacrificed to Saugerida. At the last moment, however, aided by Leolyn and another appearance of his parents' ghosts, Una manages to push the hands of the clock so that they strike one, the appointed hour of the sacrifice. As the clock strikes, thunder peals throughout the cavern. This prompts the

appearance of Saugerida, who, seeing only the Count, assumes him the blood sacrifice, and "they both sink amid sulphurous flames" (Turnbull 3.3.110). Although it was partially Una's blindness to the Count's evil that allowed him to kidnap Leolyn and take him to the Mystic Cavern in the first place, Una redeems herself in the end, overcoming dark magic and what seemed like certain death to preserve the social order.

In each play, the women's sexuality, their (sometimes questionable) choices, and the sheer villainy they encounter help sustain suspense by posing the question of whether the force of the feminine ideal will prevail over the hidden power of the abject. If there is any doubt about these virgins' total goodness at the end of each play, the closing sentiments of each drama imply the erasure of any uncertainty. The final lines of *Fontainville Abbey*, spoken by Adeline, reassure the audience: "The highest joy wealth brings to Adeline / Is that she can restore you to the world, / And bear a testimony, none shall doubt, / Of innate worth, and blest, repentant virtue" (Dunlap 3.3.315-318). In *Bluebeard*, Selim claims his love Fatima, and leads her "away from this rude scene of horror, / and bless the providence which nerves / the arm of virtue to humble vice and oppression" (Dunlap 3.3.88-90). Finally, Una has nearly the last word in *The Wood Daemon*, rejoicing, "To Heaven our thanks are due! / To Heaven, then, let us pour forth the / gratitude of our souls! . . . Its unerring hand of justice has snatched the / helpless victim of mad ambition from the ponderous dart of death! --Rejoice! / Virtue and innocence reign triumphant!" (Turnbull 3.3.125-129). In each play a struggle is fought in, by, and through the body of the interstitial virgin, and in each case virtue emerges the winner. Victory, however, comes only at the very last moment, and the relief at its arrival cannot, perhaps, quite erase the deep unease that preceded it. The very repetition of this pattern of distress, suspense, and female-directed moral resolution was, I argue, symptomatic of a larger social uncertainty that the

women on whom the nation's future depended were the right ones to do the job. In this pattern, masculine doubts hang precariously in the balance until definitively allayed through a fair and virtuous "angel maid."

Conclusion

The white virgin is significant in that she represents one of the earliest instances in which I find interstitial femininity functioning as an outlet for distress in the theatrical economy. White Americans in the Republican era, desperate for signs of a stable future in their uncertain present, latched on to the paragons of virtue that (nearly always) emerged triumphant in the face of licentious villainy. Theatre historian David Grimsted observes, "Play after play repeated this apostrophe to 'woman, lovely woman wanting only wings to ascend like a perfect angel.' Whatever her background or situation, the heroine was always 'a miracle of love and delicacy,' a paragon of excellence,' indeed, 'an earthly angel'" (172).[28] What Grimsted recounts here is the traditional interpretation of melodramatic heroines. My research has shown, however, that this stereotype is a later incarnation of its Gothic predecessor. The virgins of the Gothic plays are a little less than delicate, a little less than perfect, making the outcome of the plays unsure. This makes the dependence of Gothic dramaturgy of feminine agency important. Unlike later melodramas, when the masculine agency of the hero tends to be the source of conflict resolution, in these early works feminine agency takes the lead. This, I argue, creates a suspense and ambiguity of a different character than when it is a hero's efforts that may fail or succeed. Doubt

[28] Grimsted quotes John Minshull's *She Stoops to Conquer; or, Virgin Wife Triumphant* (1804), Charles H. Taylor's *The Drunkard's Warning* (no date), and John Howard Payne's *Adeline; or, the Victim of Seduction* (1822), respectively.

about women's capability of conquering their innate tendency to hysteria, a documented medical reality, arises in the crucial moments where feminine choice is the only thing standing between moral success and immoral destruction. As the years progressed and the fate of the United States became more certain, we see heroes take the lead in the melodramatic mode. Indeed, even some of the later Gothic plays, such as John Stokes's *The Forest of Rosenwald* (1820) and *The Tragedy of Superstition* (1824) by James Nelson Barker display more effectual masculine intervention than earlier works. The white virgin, still an intrinsic part of American dramaturgy, became more passive and demure as the nineteenth century marched forward and the "distress of independence" eased.

The stabilization of the white virgin parallels concomitant stabilization of notions of whiteness and a reduced urgency regarding the order/disorder binary. Although still a major binary relationship informing emerging concepts of American identity, as the century progressed, changing political and economic pressures threatened the integrity of other important binaries, such as the civilized/savage binary undergirding white America's claim to land. As I discuss in chapter two, the particular uncertainties of the Republican era recede only to make way for the seismic, and often violent, shifts of the Jacksonian period. The relative stability of the economy following the War of 1812, adventurous investment schemes, and an exploding immigrant population encouraged a period of growth that included not only financial gains but also a desire to expand into territories belonging to Native Americans. Many considered this expansion not only as a natural consequence of a growing population, but also as the divine right of a civilized Christian nation. Religious historian Andrew Preston contends "Religious ideas and values, foremost providence and the conceit that America was a chosen nation, the New Israel, had given expansionism an emotive power and righteous justification . . ." (Preston 136).

This expansion would occur, however, only if Americans could procure Native American lands, leading many to interpret the savage Native American presence as an intolerable obstacle to the divine mandate that white Christian civilization should occupy the continent. Undermining this commitment to Manifest Destiny, the label for this expansionist ideology, was the cruel (and seemingly unchristian and undemocratic) realities of conquest—namely, the gradual yet violent genocide of Native peoples enacted through war, forced removal, and legal treachery. As with the "distress of independence," I find that theatrical tropes of interstitial femininity exist which reflect the conflicting attitudes undergirding white America's righteous commitment to westward expansion. In chapter three, I analyze how white Americans navigated the ambivalent pressures informing the civilized/savage binary through the third-term femininity of the helpful Indian princess, epitomized in the figure of Pocahontas.

CHAPTER TWO

Jacksonian Pocahontas Dramas: Native Femininity and the "Distress of Conquest"

The exploration of the interstitial femininity of the white virgin considers her representational conventions as both evidence of and an outlet for what I call the "distress of independence" experienced in a new nation. Uncertainty regarding whether the democratic experiment could succeed if directed by a heterogeneous mass of citizens permeated the United States' early years. Audiences and playwrights found in the white virgin a space in which to focus the anxieties particular to the post-Revolutionary milieu, while simultaneously cementing ideal expectations for white feminine behavior.

This atmosphere of uncertainty particular to the Republican era eased as the United States gained the military, economic, and diplomatic strength that proved its staying power. By the 1820s, the American government believed it deserved the respect and freedom accorded to the world's other leading powers. The most well-known political statement to this effect is perhaps the Monroe Doctrine, which appears in a portion of President Monroe's address to Congress on December 2, 1823. On this occasion President Monroe declared "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered subjects for future colonization by any European powers" (Monroe 250). In this statement Monroe initiated an offensive rather than defensive diplomatic model which implied the United States had earned its right to total sovereignty.

Feeling confident they would meet no considerable interference from other foreign powers, Americans focused more attention on domestic matters. In the conclusion of his address

to Congress, Monroe recites the myriad advancements apparent in American society since the Revolution. Monroe concludes his litany with the question, "To what, then, do we owe these blessings?" He answers, "It is known to all that we derive them from the excellence of our institutions. Ought we not, then, to adopt every measure which may be necessary to perpetuate them?" (Monroe 250). Intrinsic to the perpetuation of American institutions was the expansion of United States territory into lands occupied by Native American tribes as well as the large territory owned by Mexico. The history of this expansion, which many believed to be America's divinely mandated destiny, is a contradictory one in which ostensible Christians enacted the violent removal of innocent people from their ancestral lands. While not completely uncontested, the success of this removal rested on a widespread investment in the civilized/savage binary that touted the moral and cultural superiority of white governmental, social, and theological systems over the purportedly backward and heathen ways of native tribes.

The strength of the civilized/savage binary relied on the constant rehearsal of savage inferiority in literature and the arts, including such putatively sympathetic yet actually condescending representations of the Noble Savage popularized by James Fennimore Cooper in his *Leatherstocking* novels. In both the Noble Savage and the Last Indian stereotype, audiences encountered male Indians who fought against but ultimately conceded the superiority of white weapons, architecture, and legal structures. [29] An important deviation from the repertoire focusing on male savage inferiority are depictions of female Indians in love with and sympathetic to white men.[30] A pervasive figure in this genre is Pocahontas, whose legend

[29] A more thorough discussion of these tropes begins on page 111.

[30] I use the term "Indian" when referring to nineteenth-century fictional representations or erroneous characterizations of Native Americans. The "Indian" is a rhetorical, legal, and/or aesthetic creation of Europeans and their successors, and my use of it should indicate this. When discussing actual Native Americans and their history or culture I use the term "Native Americans" or "Natives." While still not entirely accurate, given that "America" is itself a European name for a conquered land, my use of it here attempts to distance the constructed

hearkens back to colonial times.[31] Pocahontas's fame grew from the legends that she not only reputedly saved Captain John Smith from death at the hands of her father, the powerful Chief Powhatan, but that she also married the English colonist John Rolfe, with whom she had a son and thus generated the "first family of Virginia."[32] Nineteenth-century Americans interpreted Pocahontas's legendary intervention and intermarriage as founding events in United States history, linking her timely mediations to the eventual success of the colonies in Virginia and the beginning of a truly American (as opposed to European) ancestry. Following the Revolutionary War, this tale of the intervention of a Native American "princess" (a European designation) on behalf of white settlers and her marriage to one of their own became the cornerstone of both the Pocahontas myth and white Americans' sense of themselves as rightful residents of North America. Nineteenth-century Americans viewed the tale as an origin story, a pivotal episode in the colonial era directly connected to their existence as a growing nation. The national logic took on the following line of thought: If Pocahontas, "the King's dearest daughter," (Smith, *Generall* 48) loved the settlers so much as to risk her own life for a white man and then choose to marry another, then the history of Native American and white relations must be one of rightful inheritance rather than violent usurpation. For many Americans, the continued usurpation of Native American lands represented a natural extension of the alliance forged between Pocahontas and the settlers at Jamestown.

In this chapter, I argue that nineteenth-century plays based on the Pocahontas legend reflect a context within which archetypal Indian femininity was simultaneously intrinsic to the

"Indian" from living people. It is not always clear when context requires "Indian" or "Native American," accounting for occasional slippage between the two designations in my text.

[31] Plays about Pocahontas appear throughout American history. Eugene H. Jones lists thirteen plays written between 1784 and 1973. His chronology of plays with Indians ends in 1982 so it is not exhaustive.

[32] See Part III of this chapter for the complete details of the Pocahontas legend.

national vision of the United States while also epitomizing the ambivalence of a self-identified superior Anglo-Saxon race, whose own dominance relied heavily on maintaining fictions of racial and moral superiority despite the cruelly violent realities of conquest. The Anglo-Saxons' very right to the lands into which they expanded relied on the maintenance of the civilized/savage binary. Pocahontas, a "savage" who eventually amalgamated with white settlers to create the first "true" American citizens, is a distressing third term which, like the white virgin, points to underlying social distress over national stability even as she is held up as a national ideal. While the white virgin represents the public distress over how to manage the nation's newly won independence, the helpful Indian princess negotiates conflicted feelings regarding the European-cum-American rights of discovery and the violence and trickery often used to enforce those rights. As with the Gothic plays, the dramaturgical conventions of the Pocahontas dramas situate the third-term feminine protagonist in a perilous position where she must choose rightly (namely, the preservation of the colonists of Jamestown) or wrongly (loyalty to her father and her tribe).[33] The decisions she makes (or those scripted for her by American dramatists) and their rehearsal through these plays underscore the uneasy relationship of American settlers to the history of conquest upon which their nation relied. As it was the Jacksonian period which saw the enactment of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, which itself signaled a significant national commitment to the ideology of American Manifest Destiny, I will focus on three Pocahontas dramas of this era—*Pocahontas; or, the Settlers of Virginia (*1830) by George Washington Parke Custis, *Pocahontas: a Historical Drama* (1837) by Robert Dale

[33] The term "Pocahontas dramas" is the title given to this genre by Robert Tilton, in his book *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative*. Eugene H. Jones, in his survey *Native Americans as Shown on the Stage, 1753-1916*, refers to genre as "Pocahontas plays." Finding no compelling reason to favor one term over the other, I choose Tilton's term if for no other reason than it distinguishes the name of the genre somewhat from the Gothic plays in chapter one and slavery melodramas of chapter three.

Owen, and Charlotte Barnes's *The Forest Princess: or, Two Hundred Years Ago* (1848). In each rendition, the historical figure of Pocahontas functions as a shell within which playwrights evacuate Native American femininity to accommodate the thrusting machinations of American expansionism.

Part I: Jacksonian Expansionism and/in the Jacksonian Theatre

i. The Legacy of Conquest

Although Andrew Jackson served his presidential terms between 1828 and 1837, the ideologies driving his election arose with the influx of immigration beginning in the early 1820s and continued to have currency into the 1840s and '50s. Characterized by massive population growth, widespread industrial development, and expansion, both in terms of the expansion of civil rights to a wider population of white men and settlement expansion west of the Mississippi, the Jacksonian period reflects the tumult and change inevitable in an increasingly heterogeneous society (Castiglia 305). The changing American demographic prompted a reevaluation of democratic principles, inciting a new patriotic fervor as immigrants struggled to be included in the evolving definition of "American." These newcomers also struggled economically as language barriers, lack of education or skills, and anti-immigrant prejudice, especially against such groups as the Irish and the Italians, relegated immigrants to the lower classes (McDougall 35). As Amy Greenberg notes, the huge influx of immigrants helped to create stringent economical competition in urban centers, prompting many men to dream of moving westward into the frontier, where there was land and opportunity (13). As more and more families

abandoned the poverty and overcrowding of the cities to move west, the question of what to do with the Native Americans already living there became more and more urgent.

By the time that Charlotte Barnes wrote *The Forest Princess* in 1848, westward expansion was well under way. Bernice Murphy notes that in 1790, approximately 100,000 Americans lived west of the Appalachian Mountains, but by 1840, that number had increased to 7 million (Murphy 109). First referred to as "Manifest Destiny" in 1839 by Jane McManus Storm, the ideology articulated the Anglo-Saxon destiny "to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (O'Sullivan 5).[34] This particular understanding of the United States as a divinely chosen nation fated to expand its territories and, through such expansion, spread its civilizing mission throughout the world, formed the basis of what would become full-blown imperialist expansion by the turn of the twentieth century (Greenberg 18).

The politics governing expansionism in the Jacksonian era have an important foundation in the conventions of conquest formalized in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The precursor to Manifest Destiny appears in the conventions referred to as the "Doctrine of Discovery" that justified European possession of New World lands and their treatment of native peoples from the moment of first contact initiated by Christopher Columbus in 1492. According to the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the Catholic Church issued a papal bull (or official proclamation) titled the "Inter Caetera" outlining a strategy by which Spain could ensure possession of the lands encountered by Columbus. The document stated "that any land not

[34] This quote and the term "Manifest Destiny" itself are commonly attributed to John L. Sullivan, co-editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. Linda S. Hudson, in her book *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau* (2001), provides evidence that Storm coined the phrase in an 1839 article in the *Review* entitled "The Great Nation of Futurity," and also that Storm authored the 1845 article "Annexation" from which the term is commonly cited as originating. As the article originally featured O'Sullivan as the author, his is the name attributed in my citation from the article.

inhabited by Christians was available to be 'discovered,' claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers." In the actual language of the papal bull, this would allow the "Christian religion [to] be exalted and everywhere be increased and spread, that the health of the souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself" (qtd. in "Doctrine"). As exploratory missions increased throughout the sixteenth century, the European countries involved in exploration and conquest adopted this guideline as the basis of their claims to land in the New World. Under the aegis of spreading civilized Christianity, European sovereign powers enacted a history of violent land acquisition that still governs the United States federal government's relations with indigenous populations today.[35]

The "Inter Caetera" provided only the theological justification for exploration and possession. The European nations vying for rights to new lands developed legal processes by which to cement claims to the lands they "discovered." Although not formalized into what is known as "The Doctrine of Discovery" until described as such in the Supreme Court case of *Johnson vs. M'Intosh* in 1823, the conventions regulating legal discovery were in operation long before the United States won its independence. It is significant that the most enduring of the Doctrine's conventions were performative. Robert J. Miller, in a recent essay on the relationship of the Doctrine of Discovery to Indian Removal policies and Manifest Destiny, summarizes the ten constituent elements of the Doctrine, the most germane of which I describe here. The first and arguably most important of these elements, First Discovery, stipulated that "The first European country to discover land unknown to Europeans claimed that it automatically acquired property and sovereign rights over the lands and inhabitants" (R. Miller 87). Miller notes that

[35] The Doctrine of Discovery, especially as interpreted in the Supreme Court case *Johnson vs. McIntosh* in 1823, "governs United States Indian Law today and has been cited as recently as 2005 in the decision City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of N.Y." ("Doctrine of Discovery? What's That?" on www.doctrineofdiscovery.org)

the Doctrine of Discovery required that the rights associated with First Discovery could only be legitimized through what he terms "discovery rituals" such as saying mass, singing hymns, planting flags, or marking trees or other objects with royal insignia. Often, written accounts of these rituals were left at the sites of their enactment (R. Miller 89). Although an important first step, the discovery rituals on their own were not enough to legitimize possession: "a Euro-American country had to actually occupy and possess the newly found lands." For European culture, settlement was usually indicated "by building forts or settlements within a reasonable amount of time after a first discovery" (88).[36] The ritual of discovery, then, included the performative enactment of possession through settlement. Such a complicated performance of legal possession through ritual, proximity, and improvement qualify as American ancestral performances formalized theatrically in the Pocahontas dramas, which, I argue, also serve as "discovery rituals" intended to legitimize the United States' claims to North American territory.

Finally, this Doctrine also made sovereignty performative through such conventions as preemption and contiguity. Preemption stated that only the nation which had laid original claim to a territory through discovery and settlement had the right to buy the land from its inhabitants. Ostensibly the Natives did not have to sell, but if they were to sell, only the first discoverers had the right to purchase. Preemption, then, depended on the successful performance of discovery rituals and improvement. Contiguity awarded lands contiguous to the mouth of a river as belonging to whoever discovered the mouth, "even if that was thousands of miles of territory" (88). Lands claimed by virtue of contiguity affected any inhabitants of the land. This convention marks the extreme importance of discovery rituals enacted at the mouths of rivers

[36] The fort is a recurrent and important trope in American mythology and, relatedly, the Pocahontas dramas.

since, with one proprietary act, European powers could acquire huge tracts of land and sovereignty over the people occupying them.

All of the Doctrine's tenets reflect the performative normalization of what Cedric Robinson terms "white racial arrogance," (Robinson 30). This is immediately apparent in the papal bull's directive that Christianity ought rightly to be brought to the "barbarous nations" as a superior spiritual practice. In Miller's view, "Non-Christians were not deemed to have the same rights to land, sovereignty, and self-determination as Christians" (88). This rhetoric of superiority is also evident in the concept of *Terra nullius*, the idea that "if land was not occupied by anyone, or if it was occupied and not being used or governed in a fashion that European legal systems recognized, then that land was considered empty" and thus eligible for discovery (88). The conventions of the day deemed European modes of interacting with the land as superior, nullifying centuries of Native practices. Related to this was the role of civilization in the Doctrine, as Miller explains: "European-American's belief that God had directed them to bring 'civilized' ways to indigenous peoples was an important part of the doctrine" (88). Christianity and European cultivation of the land combined under the banner of "civilization" to justify the settlers' treatment of Native Americans, which was itself preempted through assumption of rightful ownership and possession initiated through performative rituals.

Upon winning its independence from Britain, the United States adopted the European processes of claiming land rights through the conventions of discovery. Miller argues that "Jefferson's launch of the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1803 was purposely targeted at the mouth of the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest to strengthen," by virtue of the convention of contiguity, "the United States' discovery claim to that area" (92). The formalization of the Doctrine of Discovery in *Johnson vs. M'Intosh* served as the legal precedent for such legislation

as the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Taken together, these legal enactments and ideologies of Anglo-Saxon moral superiority and indigenous backwardness formed the foundation of the militant and righteous expansionism encapsulated in the optimistic phrase Manifest Destiny.

ii. Jacksonian Theatre and the Vogue of Indian Drama

The Doctrine of Discovery, in emphasizing the superiority of European religious, ecological, and acquisitive legal practices, helped determine the constituent terms of the civilized/savage binary that governed American/Native American relations throughout the United States' founding decades, into the Jacksonian period and beyond.[37] In outlining the rules of discovery in legally binding documents and practices closed to Native Americans, European settlers performatively established the superiority of the "civilized" term. Significantly, however, the "civilizing mission" would have no target if not for its "savage" counterparts. In many ways, the act of civilizing invented the "savage" just as it invented the "civilizer." The difference between each construction is that "civilized" is figured positively through action, possession, and discourses of divinely mandated destiny, whereas "savage" is a negative construction that essentially takes the form "not civilized." Bernice M. Murphy, in her book *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture*, argues that one reason the Puritans feared the Natives was that they were terrified of becoming just like them, a fear she argues colonial captivity narratives encapsulate (36-37). To become savage would be to have no rights, no God, no salvation. The enveloping wilderness, equated with evil in the Bible, constantly threatened to

[37] See Tim Alan Garrison's article "Indian Policy" in *The Encyclopedia of American Political History* for an overview of the influence of the Doctrine on American treatment of Native Americans from the colonial period into the twenty-first century.

encroach on the fragile structures the settlers built and thus blur the line between the civilized and the savage. In the Jacksonian era, there seems to be less fear of "becoming savage" and more fear of the savage's retribution for the white man's unfair treatment of native people. I argue that this fear is replaced by guilt and distress over the violence initiated by Manifest Destiny. Can a destiny be so manifest that it demands payment in human lives? What proof was there that American settlers had a stronger claim to North America than its original inhabitants? Would Native Americans seek revenge and ultimately drive out white settlers? To answer these questions and alleviate this distress, Americans created fictional Indians that both expressed and neutralized these ambivalent feelings.

The explosion of population and industry that characterizes the Jacksonian period had an invigorating effect on the theatrical economy. The wide variety of immigrants entering the country meant that there were more highly heterogeneous audiences demanding a wider variety of entertainment. The development of more discernible class separation between the upper, middle, and lower classes was reflected in the development of specific theatrical styles and venues marketed to each. The middle classes especially, as Bruce McConachie and Richard Butsch observe in their works on nineteenth-century theatre, sought to define their class allegiance through the types of entertainments they patronized.[38] A significant contribution to theatre history in this era is the large body of Indian dramas produced. An "Indian drama" is a play featuring Indian characters and whose plots and characters often stem from historical events.[39] According to Eugene H. Jones in *Native Americans as Shown on the Stage, 1753-1916,*

[38] Bruce McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations* (1992)*;* Richard Butsch, "Bowery B'Hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences" in *American Quarterly* 46.3 (1994). As I discuss in chapter three, this diversification of the theatre industry continues into the 1850s.

[39] The term "Indian drama" appears in Arthur Hobson Quinn's *History of the American Drama, from the Beginning to the Civil War* (1917). Other sources, such as Gerald Bordman's "Entry for Native Americans in Drama" in *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre* (2004) refer to them as "native-themed dramas" or "plays with Native Americans." I choose to utilize Quinn's term, as it is consistent with my usage of "Indian" in this chapter to indicate

between 1800 and 1859 over 120 Indian dramas were written, with over half of those written in the 1820s and 1830s. Figure 2.1 depicts a performance of an unidentified Indian drama at the Bowery Theatre. The massive audience indicates the popularity of the piece.

Figure 2.1 Indian Drama at the Bowery 1856 This image featured in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* on September 13, 1856 depicts a performance at the Bowery theatre. The dress of the actors indicates that they represent an Indian chief, and Indian maiden, and a colonist. Based on the date and the popularity of the play at the Bowery theatre, it is highly possible that the play in performance is *Po-ca-hon-tas*; *or, the Gentle Savage* (1855) by John Brougham. From the Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

a fictional ideal rather than an actual person. The Indians of Indian dramas were, with perhaps the exception of Pocahontas, one-dimensional characters patterned on stereotypes, as I discuss in this section. Terms such as "plays with Native Americans" ignores the difference between the Indians in the plays and the Native Americans being forced from their lands.

Jones cites two primary reasons for the predilection for Indian dramas in the 1820s and '30s. First, in response to growing nationalism, this era saw a new demand for plays on American subjects (84). Secondly, the Indian plays were easy to produce, as they followed the easy formulas of melodrama which capitalized on the form's Manichean depictions of virtue and vice and the appetite for stereotype and spectacle that this genre fostered (see chapter three for further discussion of melodramatic conventions). Arthur Hobson Quinn, in an early twentieth-century history of the American stage, echoes Jones comments when he observes, "It was natural that the Indian should be treated frequently at this time. The love of romance found in him [the Indian] a link between the strange and familiar, which secured freedom of treatment at the same time that it satisfied desire for a native subject" (Quinn 269).[40] Quinn credits George Washington Parke Custis (1781-1857) with starting the Jacksonian vogue with his 1827 play *The Indian Prophecy*. The play, apparently based on a historical incident, depicts a visit to George Washington by an Indian chief who tells Washington how he tried to kill him but was thwarted by Washington's protection from the Great Spirit. This plot line illustrates the trend in Indian drama to justify white settlement and expansion. In line with the Doctrine of Discovery, the plays emphasize the divine rightness of white conquest.

While Jones and Quinn correctly identify Indians as "native subjects," the reason for their frequent treatment in this era cannot be attributed to mere availability. I expand on Jones's thinking and add that both of the reasons he cites, namely their dealing with a native subject and their formulaic accessibility, were more politically inflected than Jones concedes. Native Americans were more than just "native subjects"; like black Americans, discussed in chapter

[40] Quinn is quick to note that although this era saw an abundance of Indian dramas, the genre itself was not new, citing works such as *Ponteach* written in 1766 and *Tammany* by Anne Kemble Hatton performed in 1794 at the John St. theatre in New York (269-270).

three, they were specific subjects against which white Americans were struggling to define the boundaries of their nationalism. Indians were a "foreign" entity impeding domestic progress by their mere presence. Their eradication (epitomized by representations of native men) or cooperation (the role of native femininity) was essential to the nationalism of this time. Its easy rehearsal in the predictable conventions of melodrama is thus a balm to anxieties over these foreign entities (and the policies of their removal). Amy Kaplan, in her essay "Manifest Domesticity," links the growing nationalism in this era to expansionist policies, which she argues relied on an understanding of nationalism as a domestic concern that was then necessarily contrasted with the foreign: "The border between the domestic and foreign . . . deconstructs when we think of domesticity not as a static condition but also as the process of domestication, which entails conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien" (184). The Indian dramas were themselves a residual product of the anxieties, what I call the "distress of conquest," which both necessitated and accompanied the nationalist agenda of Manifest Destiny. Further evidence of this is apparent in the types of Indians populating the drama.

Jeffrey Mason begins his essay "The Politics of Metamora" with the provocative statement, "The American Indian is a myth" (92). I take Mason to mean that all that American culture claims to know about Indians is what has been fabricated in novels, plays, even newspapers and anthropological texts. From the time of first contact, Native Americans have been portrayed in terms of what Jones calls "the fantastic imaginary," a realm that runs parallel to experience but does not resemble reality (Jones 1). I identify the impulse to rehearse fictions about Indians as a symptom of the "distress of conquest," the uneasiness Murphy also identifies in early white settlers' paranoid and nervous relationships to the land and inhabitants of North America. From a European perspective, discovery and conquest, as exemplified in discovery

rituals, were orderly processes by which morally, socially, and culturally superior races acquired the land divinely granted to them by virtue of that same superiority. According to Murphy in her study of the impulses informing American Rural Gothic fiction, "For the settlers, the Americas were a kind of metaphorical and literal tabula rasa upon which they could project their deepest fears, longings, and anxieties; a space filled with both promise and terror" (19). This terror, I contend, was prompted just as much by fear of the unknown continent as by guilt over the violent and often inhumane means by which settlers enacted their conquest of native peoples. Murphy pointedly observes that, whether conscious or not, the recognition that "freedom and prosperity were built on the suffering of others" contributed to "racial and territorial anxieties" (Murphy 54). Examples of this guilt can be found in American soldiers' writings. Native scholar Sarah Pearsall writes that in 1779, George Washington, frustrated by the Iroquois alliance with Britain, "determined a campaign of systematic violence against women and children . . ." (61). Afterwards, "One soldier wrote home: 'I really feel guilty as I applied the torch to huts that were Homes of Content until *we ravagers* came spreading desolation everywhere'" (64) (emphasis added). While American rhetoric insisted it was only "'merciless Indian savages' who killed people," the soldier's letter speaks to an uneasy recognition that American victory was pursued through ostensibly "savage" means (Pearsall 65). The "distress of conquest," I argue, suffuses dramas about American Indians. Representations of Indian masculinity evokes the "terror" that Murphy refers to, while the "promise" lay within Indian femininity.

Practically speaking, another reason why myths about and fictional representations of Indians held more ontological sway than the truth was the growing scarcity of actual Native Americans in and around urban centers. There were, frankly, more fictional referents than

material ones. According to Jones, "As the nineteenth century began . . . the Indians, while in reality being destroyed or removed from white dominated areas that included theatrical centers, were increasing in an inverse ration in those centers as stage presences" (19). Jones continues, noting that these representations were "no more human than illustrations of abstract ideas" (22). Like the white women discussed in chapter one and the slaves that comprise the focus of chapter three, the formulations of native bodies had more to do with the competing ideologies informing their representations than anything about their referents. Despite this dubious ontology, the way that Indians were imagined had everything to do with the policies enacted to limit their sovereignty, resulting in mass displacement, suffering, and death. As Rebecca Blevins Faery reminds us in her book *Cartographies of Desire*, "Myths do . . . have material consequences. . ." (8).

Where Native femininity is almost always represented as somewhere between civilized and savage, Native masculinity is almost always portrayed as the epitome of savagery that emphasizes the superiority of civilized masculinity. The most common masculine Indian type was the Noble Savage, a character epitomized in the nineteenth century stages by the character Metamora but who originally emerged in the time of Homer ("Noble Savage"). Articulated as the antithesis of the civilized man, the Noble Savage had the infinite capacity for goodness that was understood to be the natural state of unenlightened man, but who lacked the capacity for improvement that could only be achieved through participation in civil society. The Enlightenment context created the framework where participating in the corrupting influences of civilization was more desirable than what was perceived as the innocence and simplicity of the noble savage. Rousseau promotes this in *The Social Contract:*

> Although in this state [civil society], he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are so stimulated and developed, his ideas so extended, his feelings so ennobled, and his whole soul so uplifted, that, did not the abuses of this new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it forever, and, instead of a stupid and unimaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man. (Rousseau, *The Social* 195-196)[41]

On the nineteenth-century American stage, the Noble Savage was "an admirable Native American of heroic honor, profound sentiments, and the expectation of a dark future, whose virtue [natural goodness] could be used to contrast dramatically with the uglier qualities of European-born white men" (Jones 23). Literary and dramatic representations of the Noble Savage were products of Romanticism. Stage versions of the Noble Savage, like all of the most touted popular nineteenth-century American dramaturgy, thus traded in sentiment. The scenes of deepest sentiment were those of sacrifice, often the mode of the Noble Savage's life.

A ubiquitous type of Noble Savage was the Last Indian, such as Metamora in *Metamora: the Last of the Wampanoags* (1829) by John Augustus Stone. "Last Indians" are male Indians that are also the last (or nearly) of their tribe to continue fighting white settlement. Inevitably, the Last Indian concedes to the superior might of white civilization (Mason 95). The fixation on this type signals a habit of perceiving the Native Americans as disappearing that has been present

[41] Notice Rousseau's gendered language—the advantages of civilization are the purview of men. As discussed in chapter one, it was women's role to accompany man on his civilizing mission but not subject herself to its "abuses," lest it disorder her to the point of hysteria. Depicting Native femininity as acquiescent to but not active in civil society is related to this as well.

from at least the late colonial period. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* in a section on the region's population, Thomas Jefferson remarks on the great reduction in the local Native population. He equates low local population numbers with disappearance rather than displacement (101). Jefferson is not alarmed by their disappearance, in fact, he is more concerned with the loss of archeological data than the people it would have described: "It is to be lamented then, very lamented, that we have suffered so many of the Indian tribes already to extinguish, without our having previously collected and deposited in the records of literature, the general rudiments at least of the language they spoke" (101). Perhaps Jefferson considered the disappearance of the Native American inevitable in the face of white expansion. This is certainly the message communicated by the Last Indian trope, who most often dies at the conclusion of his drama, giving into the onward press of the white invaders. Such death scenes are scenes of the hyperbolic honor attributed to the Noble Savage.

Not all portraits of Indian masculinity resemble the sympathetic and Noble Savage who will honorably know when he is beaten and retreat before the superior might of white conquest. In the late Jacksonian period, representations of the "bad Indian" began to appear on popular stages, especially those catering to the working classes such as the Bowery Theatre in New York. The Indian, according to Jones, "was viewed increasingly as a pestilential obstacle to the self-righteous claims of the white man's 'Manifest Destiny'" (viii). The "bad Indian" first appeared on the stage in Louisa Medina's adaptation of the popular novel *Nick o' the Woods* (1838). In this play, "the Indians here are all villains, worthless savages to be exterminated by superior whites" (Jones 75). Tired of waiting for the Noble Savage to acquiesce to the march of progress, this play rehearses the active elimination of an infestation, with the hateful tone continuing through to the play's end. Jones describes the spectacle: "The play ends with the most violent

possible wish fulfillment: total, bloody, destruction of the Indians, the stage ablaze in a tableau of their burning wigwams, watched by a ring of gloating whites" (Jones 76). This attitude resembles the same which informs what Greenberg calls "aggressive expansionism," which was a way of enacting Manifest Destiny that "advocated using force of arms to obtain new territories" (Greenberg 5). Aggressive expansionists supported filibustering campaigns in which citizens leading private armies waged war against foreign nations, "often in the face of open hostility from their own governments" (5). Subscribers to aggressive expansion, many of these working class men, feeling the pinch of limited economic opportunities in the crowded cities and yearning for space to make their own way, were ostentatious in their belief in their entitlement to the land and resented the continued presence of Native Americans there.

The character types allotted to Indian women generally function to neutralize the threat of Indian men. For most of the nineteenth century, the dominant trope for Native femininity was found in what I call the "helpful Indian princess," an Indian woman who helps white men in peril, usually on behalf of a particular white man with whom she has fallen in love. An early popular example of this type is Yarico in *Inkle and Yarico*, a staple of the American theatre from the 1740s (see Figure 2.2). Jones observes that in this role, "an attractive Indian girl becomes more desirable and approvable as a heroine by aiding the whites and giving her customs up for theirs" (51). Jones's term for this character type is the Pathetic Dusky Heroine and he identifies her as the female counterpart to the Noble Savage. The attribution "Pathetic" refers to the tragic ends that generally befall these heroines who often lose their lives in their efforts to protect the white hero (made heroic, in some ways, by virtue of this sacrifice, as its enactment suggests the importance and worth of the person on whose behalf it is made). Pocahontas, for example, does

not suffer death in most versions of her tale (Barnes's play being the exception), but resembles the Pathetic Dusky Maiden in all other respects.

Figure 2.2 ***Inkle and Yarico*** In this drawing from a scene from the stage play *Inkle and Yarico*, the Englishman Inkle observes Yarico for the first time and becomes instantly smitten. Source and author of this drawing is unknown. From the Harvard Theatre Collection.

Unlike male Indian characters, female Indians are not firmly ensconced in the "savage" end of the civilized/savage binary. Through their divided loyalties they are in some degree white at heart, invested in, indebted to, or attracted to white culture. Their choices in the plays support the civilizing mission. They are often, as happens repeatedly in the Pocahontas dramas, compared with white women, most often as equal to them, and in some cases as superior. Where the male Indian concedes defeat against insurmountable odds or dies, leaving choice largely out

of the equation in either instance, the trope of the helpful Indian princess depends crucially on choice; it is the actions she takes, usually in defiance of her traditions and family loyalties, that determine whether white men live or die and also provides the basis of the plots of the plays in which she appears.

Also unlike male characters, representations of Native women are sexualized, based in a large degree on their sexual availability (an aspect also important to the representation of mixed-race slave women discussed in chapter three). The sexualized ways in which Native women are imagined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (accommodating, white-loving, available) has everything to do with the anxious ways in which Native femininity was imagined in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (man-eating, hostile, monstrous). Early explorers' fear of Native femininity is apparent in maps and paintings of the New World. Louis Montrose, in his essay "The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery," notes, "By the 1570s, allegorical personifications of America as a female nude with feathered headdress had begun to appear in engravings and paintings, on maps and title pages, throughout Western Europe" (3). Montrose points to Jan van der Straet's drawing of Vespucci's discovery of America as typical of this style of depiction (see Figure 2.3). As it encapsulates European fears and fantasies regarding the New World in the sixteenth century, Montrose's description of the painting is worth quoting at length:

> Here a naked woman, crowned with feathers, upraises herself from her hammock to meet the gaze of the armored and robed man who has just come ashore; . . . Standing with his feet firmly planted upon the ground, Vespucci observes the personified and feminized space that will bear his name. This recumbent figure, now discovered and roused from her torpor, is about to be hailed, claimed, and possessed as *America*. . . . Vespucci carries with him the variously empowering

> ideological and technological instruments of civilization, exploration and conquest: a cruciform staff with a banner bearing the Southern Cross, a navigational astrolabe, and a sword. . . . Close to the picture's vanishing point—in the distance, yet at the center—a group of naked savages, potential subjects of the civilizing process, are preparing a cannibal feast. . . . America's body pose is partially mirrored by the apparently female figure who turns the spit and the clearly female figure who cradles an infant as she awaits the feast. . . . In terms of the pictorial space, this scene of cannibalism is perspectivally distanced, pushed into the background; in terms of the pictorial surface, however, it is placed at the center of the visual field, between the mutual gazes of Americus and America, and directly above the latter's outstretched arm. (Montrose 4) (original emphasis)

Montrose traces the inspiration for van der Straet's rendering to the discoverer Vespucci's letters detailing his accounts with native peoples. These accounts, with their emphasis on female cannibalism and insatiable sexual desire, often figure Native femininity in terms of what Blevins Faery calls "monstrous domesticity" (97). Goeman, influenced by such feminist geographers as Doreen Massey and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, identifies European maps as artifacts of "traditional geography," which she defines as "heteropatriarchal representation[s] of national space" (14). In this practice mapmakers (and, by virtue of access to maps, colonists and explorers) are gendered male and the land they depict is gendered as female, fodder for the male gaze. In the context of early discovery, the land is simultaneously female, virginal, and threatening. In the context of Manifest Destiny and the Jacksonian Indian dramas, the land, as epitomized by such figures as Pocahontas, is welcoming and just begging to help reproduce the values of settler culture.

While Pocahontas is not the only example of Indian femininity populating the Jacksonian Indian dramas, I limit my focus in this chapter to plays representing her. My motivation for this lies in Pocahontas's connection to American history. Other female Indian characters, while not unimportant, are purely fictional and so figure more peripherally in the national narrative than does Pocahontas. Paying attention to how each playwright subtly manipulates the historical figure of Pocahontas demonstrates the tension between myth and history that comprise national origin stories in the United States and how literature manipulated these stories of the past to help make sense of their dreams for the future.

Figure 2.3 "America" An engraving of the painting "America" by Jan van der Straet (ca. 1600). From the ARTSTOR Database, accessed through the University of California, Irvine.

Part III: The Pocahontas Legend on the Jacksonian Stage

Pocahontas made her literary debut in the epic poem *The Vision of Columbus* written by John Davis in 1787, which he developed into the novel *The First Settlers of Virginia* in 1805 (Tilton 46).[42] Tilton notes that Davis's rendering of the Pocahontas narrative "was eagerly awaited by a public that saw the completion of an American epic as another manifestation of their destined glorious nationhood" (49). Tilton also observes that "In the hands of Davis and his successors," which would, of course, include the series of playwrights that adapted the narrative, "the events of the Pocahontas narrative simultaneously served to promote the cultural coalescence of the fledgling nation and to inspire a tremendous amount of literary activity" (35). The process of narrating a nation's past is part of enunciating the boundaries that define national subjects above and beyond geographical boundaries (which, of course, is not to underestimate the significance of demarcating physical spaces as "nation"). Goeman argues, "National mythmaking is key to the organization of space; it determines who belongs and does not belong" (36). From these combined perspectives, national mythology is performative, a rehearsal of plotlines that tell the story of "Us" as opposed to "Them". As with the rituals of discovery, the telling of these stories, whether in histories, poems, novels, or plays, must be repeated both to confer upon them a sense of authentic permanence and to distract, by means of the closed narrative with its inevitable outcome, from contradictions inherent in the story's implications. As Joseph Roach explains, performances "make publicly visible through symbolic action both

[42] While Davis's work is the first piece of Pocahontas fiction (unless, of course, one counts Smith's account of the Rescue and other events in his *Generall Historie*), Tilton notes that it was preceded by Robert Beverley's *History and Present State of Virginia*, written in 1705 and which Tilton identifies as "The first serious attempt to reproduce the Pocahontas narrative from the primary documents" (Tilton 19). Beverley would certainly have considered Smith's work a primary document, and so included his account of the Rescue (it was not until after the Civil War that the factual authenticity of Smith's account came into question). Davis almost certainly read Beverley's account and was influenced by its contents.

the tangible existence of social boundaries and, at the same time, the contingency of those boundaries on fictions of identity, their shoddy construction of inchoate otherness, and, consequently, their *anxiety-inducing instability*" (Roach 39) (emphasis added). The anxious repetition of the discovery rituals enacted by early explorers points to uncertainty as their legacy, given their basis in ephemeral words and gestures. The Pocahontas narrative, largely reduced to recounting Pocahontas's rescue of John Smith and her romance with John Rolfe, was itself a sort of discovery ritual meant to help Americans root the origins of their "history" in the context of events that would simultaneously identify a neat beginning while justifying present and future national building projects.

i. Pocahontas the Woman, Pocahontas the Legend

> *"Native women are at the center of how our nations, tribal and nontribal, have been imagined."*
>
> - *Mishuana Goeman*, Mark my Words -

As my analysis of the Pocahontas dramas depends crucially on the plays' oscillation between fact and fiction, I devote space here to outlining what is known about Pocahontas and what is mere conjecture. According to encyclopedist Liz Sonnenborn, Pocahontas is "Perhaps the best known Native American in history. . ." (134). Despite this renown, there are relatively few historically verifiable facts about her life. That she did exist is not in doubt; written records of interactions with Pocahontas from a variety of disparate sources testify to this fact, including eyewitness accounts of her visit to King James's court in 1616. We know that her father was Powhatan, "a powerful Indian leader who led a confederation of some thirty tribes in the Chesapeake Bay area of what is now eastern Virginia" (Sonnenborn 134). The exact year of

Pocahontas's birth is not known, but historians agree that it was sometime around 1595. Details about her early childhood are scarce. Even her name reflects a degree of uncertainty concerning her historical record, apparent in an entry about her in *The Encyclopedia of Native American Biography*: "In Algonquin, the name Pokantes meant 'She is Playful'; in the Pawmunkey language, she was called Matoaka, Mataoka, Matowaka, Matoax, and Matasoaks'ats, all of which mean 'She Plays with Things'" (Johansen and Grinde, Jr. 294). Other sources state further variations and translations of her name(s), such as Sonnenborn's assertion that her real name was Matoaba, meaning "playful" (134). Sonnenborn is careful to point out what other sources ignore, which is that "Pocahontas" was not the princess's real name, but a nickname "most often translated as 'frolicsome'" (134). The Powhatans believed that keeping her true name secret from the settlers would protect her. In a subtle departure from other sources, an essay by modern-day Powhatan Chief Roy Crazy Horse condemning the 1995 Disney film about Pocahontas translates the name Pocahontas as "'the naughty one' or 'spoiled child.'" Some sources, such as *Notable Native Americans,* fail to mention the Matoaka variation of the name at all, misleading readers to believe Pocahontas was her true name. The uncertainty conveyed by contested accounts of even her most basic biographical information demonstrates the complexity of representing Pocahontas as a historical figure.

That there were instances of interaction between Pocahontas and white Virginian settlers before her famous rescue of John Smith seems likely. The English colonist William Strachey writes about Pocahontas in *The Historie of Travaile in Virginia Brittanica* (written in 1612 but not published until 1849). In this history Strachey relays an account of Pocahontas in which she, as a child of approximately eleven, arrived in the Jamestown marketplace with other native children. Pocahontas and the children were apparently naked and turning cartwheels among the

goods for sale. Smith also mentions Pocahontas in his first history of Virginia, writing in his *The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia* (1612) about "rumors in the colony about Pocahontas as a prospective wife for himself" (Blevins Faery 104).[43] These accounts confirm, at the very least, that the English knew of Pocahontas and could recognize her by sight sometime around the year 1607.

Some sources hold that in the wake of escalating conflicts between the English and the Powhatans, Pocahontas ceased any contact with the English and was married to a warrior named Kocoum when she was thirteen, a fact recorded by Strachey (Sonnenborn 136, O'Donnell 206). No further mention of her appears until 1613, the year she was abducted by Captain Samuel Argall, an Englishman who had taken over for Smith as leader of Jamestown (Sonnenborn 136). Pocahontas was not idle during her captivity: "During that time she was taught English and schooled in white customs" (136).[44] It was also during the time of her captivity, which continued into 1614, that Pocahontas agreed to marry John Rolfe, a Virginian plantation owner from England. Whether this union was one of love or a condition of her release is unknown. What is known is that in order to be married Pocahontas needed to be baptized as a Christian. At her baptism the Reverend Alexander Whitaker gave Pocahontas the name Rebecca, adding another moniker to the already confusing list of appellations.[45] Pocahontas's marriage, which Argall

[43] Significantly, this history makes absolutely no mention of Smith's recuse by Pocahontas, the first mention of which appears in a 1616 letter to Queen Anne. This letter was written while Pocahontas was in England to be presented at Court. The full account appears seven years after Pocahontas's death in Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624).

[44] In the plays, characterizations of Pocahontas imply that she is well acquainted with (and enamored by) white customs well before meeting Smith and his cohort. The historical record indicates that her captivity was where this education occurred. This kind of historical departure is indicative of the surrogation process by which Pocahontas has become a national effigy.

[45] Rebecca Blevins-Faery points out that this name resonates with the biblical Rebekah, wife of Isaac, in the book of Genesis. Rebekah, thought to be barren, becomes pregnant with twins. According to Genesis, "the children jostled each other in the womb so much that she exclaimed, 'If it is like this, why go on living!'" God apparently spoke to her then, saying, "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples are separating while still within you; But one will be stronger than the other and the older will serve the younger." (Genesis 25: 23). When the babies are born, "The first to emerge was reddish," and due to being covered with hair was called Esau (25:25). The second was Jacob, the

claims was performed with Powhatan's blessing, marked the beginning of what is known as "the Peace of Pocahontas" between the English and the Virginian tribes that would last until Powhatan's death in 1622 (Sonnenborn 136). This time of peace allowed for the Virginian colonies to prosper. Pocahontas's role in this prosperity through her marriage to Rolfe is one important reason that nineteenth-century Americans considered her legend a national origin myth.

In 1615, Pocahontas gave birth to a son named Thomas Rolfe. A year later the Virginian Company invited the entire Rolfe family to visit England and be presented at Court. Pocahontas became a celebrity during her time in London. (Smith writes that he had a meeting with her during that time, but this account is not verified.) When the Rolfes set sail for home in 1617, Pocahontas became gravely ill, causing their ship to dock at Gravesend in order for her to seek medical help. She could not be helped, however, and died in Gravesend on March 21, 1617 at the approximate age of 21. Her son Thomas was raised and educated in London but returned to his father's lands in Virginia in the 1640s (Sonnenborn 137). His descendants still celebrate their connection to the "princess" Pocahontas, as evidenced by a reenactment of the marriage of Rolfe and Pocahontas on the 500th anniversary of the event April 15, 2014 (Shapiro).

The above details, incomplete as they are, comprise the most reliable account of actual events in Pocahontas's life. Given the English perspective and the questionable validity of the primary documents upon which knowledge of Pocahontas rests, it is nearly impossible to compile a "true" account of Pocahontas's life or even her character. William Strachey's own notions of appropriate feminine behavior, for example, highly influenced his account of Pocahontas in the marketplace. The sight of a naked girl child cartwheeling through such a

younger of God's prophecy; no mention is made of his skin tone. Rebekah's knowledge that Jacob will be the greater twin influences her to treat him preferentially in Genesis Chapter 27.

public place shocked Strachey. While most Powhatan children of Pocahontas's age probably wore little to no clothing in warm weather (Sonnenborn 135), Strachey could only interpret this event from within his own cultural matrix. Blevins Faery notes the tone of unease that accompanies Strachey's description: "This is Pocahontas from an English point of view, as a whirling figure of gender transgression or destabilization" (104). In other words, Strachey's gendered values color his perception of Pocahontas. Similarly, Pocahontas's baptism represented to the settlers a successful event in their civilizing mission rather than the act of personal religious devotion it may have been (or the coerced capitulation it probably was):

> The conversion and baptism of Pocahontas had great symbolic importance to the English. They morally justified their invasion of North America as an effort to save the souls of the 'heathen' natives there. By converting the daughter of a powerful Indian chief, the residents of Jamestown could prove to themselves and to their king that they were making inroads in this mission. (Sonnenborn 136)

Again, Pocahontas's personal history and motivations become subsumed in the conqueror's narrative.

In the plays examined in this section, Pocahontas's marriage to Rolfe is the only historically verifiable event included in all of the plays. The courtship between Rolfe and Pocahontas, which, for the sake of convenience, I refer to hereon as "The Romance," serves as a major plot device in all of the dramas. The playwrights embroider it, however, with fantasies of the union as one of romantic love and mutual affection rather than the political alliance it probably was. This same revisionist tendency is what makes John Smith's account of his rescue by Pocahontas, already historically questionable, even less likely. As Chief Roy Crazy Horse remarks, "The truth is that Smith's fellow colonists described him as an abrasive, ambitious, self-

promoting mercenary soldier" (Crazy Horse). This assessment of Smith's character, and the fact that he fails to mention his rescue until 1616 when Pocahontas is being celebrated in London, suggests that he sought to capitalize on Pocahontas's fame by fabricating an intimate association with her. Despite this and her marriage to Rolfe, Smith's rescue by Pocahontas is still the event that most defines her place in American and British folklore, and for which she is most "remembered." As Tilton laments, "by the second half of the nineteenth century the Pocahontas narrative was so ingrained in the American consciousness that its authenticity had ceased to be an issue of any significance" (5). More important than its veracity, as I discuss in my analyses of the plays, was its symbolic value.

The details of Pocahontas's rescue of John Smith (hereafter referred to as "The Rescue") presented by Smith in his two accounts do not exactly match, but the important basics remain consistent. In his letter to Queen Anne he writes, "After some six weeks fatting amongst those Salvage [sic] courtiers, at the minute of my execution, she [Pocahontas] hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine; and not only that, but so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted back to Jamestown" (Smith, "John"). He also states that on his return to Jamestown he found the settlers there near starvation, and that without the food sent from Powhatan's tribe they would have starved. Smith names Pocahontas as one who brought food on many of those occasions. The account of these events in Smith's *Generall Historie* (1624) rehearse these same particulars but in much greater detail. In the *Generall Historie*, for example, Smith gives a physical description of Pocahontas's intervention: ". . . Pocahontas the Kings dearest daughter, when no intreaty could prevaile, got his head in her armes, and laid her owne upon his to save him from death" (Smith, *Generall* 48). Contemporary historians note that, if this event did indeed take place, it was most likely an initiation ritual common for young Native

men of that region. In saving Smith, Pocahontas was claiming him as a brother (Blevins Faery 115). Evidence for this resides in Smith's account that after Pocahontas's intervention, Powhatan "told him now they were friends, and presently he should goe to *James* towne, to send him two great gunnes, and a grindstone, for which he would give him the County of *Capahowosick*, and for ever esteeme him as his sonne *Nantaquond*" (Smith, *Generall* 48) (original emphasis). This gesture of ritual naming and exchange, considered also in light of the elaborate feasts and performances Smith describes as happening in the days leading up to his rescue, implies that the entire ordeal was a ritual of *affiliation* with the Powhatan tribe. Smith, however, seems to understand the events in terms of *disaffiliation*, a consideration crucial to the interpretation of Pocahontas as allied with the civilizers and their mission. This narrated act of disaffiliation is the backbone of the legendary significance of Pocahontas in the American national archive.

Like The Romance, Smith's narrative of Pocahontas's intervention is a crucial plot point in the Pocahontas dramas. I refer to the dramatic portrayal of this event as The Rescue. Stage portrayals tend to intertwine the two events, with The Rescue precipitating The Romance or vice versa. This dramaturgical exigency confuses even further the already occluded history of the woman Pocahontas, as it places Smith and Rolfe in Virginia at the same time (which never occurred historically) and poses as sequential events which, if they happened at all, took place years apart. The mutual dependency of these two embroidered events, as I elaborate more fully below, create the circumstances in which Pocahontas's savage birthright contends with her attraction to white culture. The rehearsal of her choice to betray her people in order to support white settler culture suggests an uneasiness of the rightness of the entire agenda of conquest.

ii. Dramaturgical Consistencies in the Jacksonian Pocahontas Dramas

By the time James Nelson Barker wrote *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage* in 1808, the Pocahontas legend as defined by The Rescue and The Romance was firmly entrenched, forever equating her story with the success of the Virginian colonies and thus American settlement in general. Renditions of her story were no longer about Pocahontas, per se, but rather the implications of her actions for the colonist characters of the plays and their "real life" descendants (the plays' audiences). This is apparent in each play's use of Smith's account of The Rescue. This shared investment in Smith's questionable version of one of the major events of the Pocahontas legend is important to understanding the plays as reifying the gendered and racialized ideologies at work in the Jacksonian-era national narrative. Each playwright takes liberties with the tale, despite the claims of some authors that the plays are historically accurate with changes being made only for the sake of dramaturgical coherence.[46] Regardless of how the playwrights (further) embroider the legend, what is important for my purposes is the *cultural perspective* from which the story is told. In a sort of ventriloquism act, the playwrights place white, Christian ideals in the mouth of an abstracted Indian princess in an attempt to reconcile one fantasy with another. As Mason asserts in his analysis of the mass appeal of Edwin Forrest's portrayal of Metamora, "The key element in this chemistry was Forrest himself, playing the role of 'Indian' while signifying Euro-American values, his mimesis at odds with his semiosis" (105).

[46] Robert Dale Owen, for example, asserts, "The characters introduced into the piece, with two trifling exceptions, are strictly historical; and every principal event represented or alluded to, in the course of the Drama, occurred, if Smith's own history may be trusted, with very little variation as here set down" (21). This assertion seems odd after reading the play, which features scenes between characters who were never present in Virginia at the same time and which include events that obscure the historical narrative. Charlotte Barnes, too, claims to base her play in the research she conducted at the Library of the British Museum in 1844, and explains any variation as "a necessity consequent upon the acting of the drama" (270). Apparently this includes a purely fictional prophetic vision seen by Pocahontas at the play's end.

Each plays' cooption of Pocahontas's story for its own ends glorifies the inevitability of white settlement while not entirely sublimating the dark cost of conquest. The Native femininity epitomized by Pocahontas is crucial to the success of the sublimation, despite the reality that even the plays' idealized depictions of Powhatan's most favored daughter cannot quite erase a sense of unease that suffuses the plays.

Along with their adoption of The Rescue, other elements common to the plays are treated in very similar ways by each. The first, and possibly most important, similarity that unites these dramas is the relationship each author illustrates as existing between the Pocahontas legend, the success of England's colonial mission, the present (nineteenth-century) existence of the United States, and its future expansion. As Barnes argues in the introduction to her version of the legend, "The various historians and colonists concur in the assertion that but for the benefactions of Pocahontas, Virginia would have been lost to England" (Barnes n.p.). Barnes demonstrates her own agreement with this position, asserting, "How far the aspect of civilization, of national character and government . . . in America would have been affected, had other lands given customs, laws, and language to so extensive and central a portion of our continent, is a question . . . [that] in justice to Pocahontas, should ever be associated with her name." Owen echoes this in the introduction to his own play, stating "The story of my heroine is in every heart. It is intimately connected with the very first successful effort to colonize Northern America from Europe, a marked epoch in our history" (Owen 21). The edition of Custis's play which I reference includes no author's note or other introductory material. However, from the title of the play itself, *Pocahontas; or, the Settlers of Virginia,* I deduce a direct correlation between the legend of Pocahontas and the civilizing mission embodied in English settler culture. The

investment in Pocahontas as the guarantor of the United States' past, present, and future greatness underlies the plays' plot developments.

Whether indirectly informing the play, as is the case with Owen, or providing a motivational through-line for the action, as occurs in Custis and Barnes, the mantra of Manifest Destiny stands as the anchor for the ideology of the settlers' cultural and political superiority in each play. This civilized superiority is always posited against the Indians' savage inferiority. Even Owen's Smith, who generally acts honorably toward the Natives, refers to them in ways that emphasize their pitiful state: "Oh, these savages-- / These bestial heathen—ign'rant Pagan wretches— . . ." (Owen 190). Despite these protestations of inferiority, the Indians in these plays still represent the primary obstacle to European settlement. The question of whether the chief Powhatan and his warriors will encourage or inhibit the colony at Jamestown propels the plot of each play. In each case, the introduction of Pocahontas as a third-term between the Indian men and the male settlers is crucial to the settlers' success. As Blevins Faery observes, "The drama of Pocahontas . . . is the drama of colonialism itself—writ small in the ancient, private, domestic tragedy of one woman's life, but writ large in the subsequent history of the nation that made her its founding heroine" (133). Although the familiar legend from which each play springs guarantees colonial triumph, the dramatic effect of each play depends on the uncertainty of the settlers' success and the danger and spectacle surrounding Pocahontas's crucial interventions.

The narratives of conquest that suffuse the plays and the formulation of Native femininity on which they depend also rely on the patterning of relationships after the civilized/savage binary. This same binary, as I discussed above in Part I of this chapter, informed white/Native relationships from the time of the papal bull that influenced Congress's 1823 delineation and

adoption of the Doctrine of Discovery. Each play quickly sets up an oppositional relationship between the civilized and savage characters in such a way that the civilized term is superior to the savage term. This is apparent even in the manner in which the characters are listed in each play's list of *dramatist personae*. Without variation, the settlers and other European men are listed first (and marked out as "English" or "settlers"), with the "Indians," or, as Barnes calls them, "North Americans," listed beneath them. Following literary convention, the women of both sets appear even further down the list. This subtle convention of dramatic hierarchy may be considered expedient or simply traditional; I read this ordering, however, as a textual representation of residual notions of the superior value of white civilized males over what, from the white masculine perspective, are always "B" (as in "Not A") terms in the A/B binary pattern organizing nineteenth-century American thought.

The value designated by placement in the *dramatist personae* is supported by each play as each establishes the affiliations of the disparate groups of characters with either "civilized" or "savage" as early as the plays' first scenes. Significantly, this always happens before Pocahontas appears on the scene. In Custis's *Pocahontas,* the play opens with the arrival of English ships on the James River. Matacoran, an Indian warrior betrothed to Pocahontas, and Barclay, an Englishman in residence since the first settlement at Jamestown, watch the arrival of the ships. Matacoran questions Barclay closely about the settlers' arrival. Barclay's knowledge of the ships, their flags, and their inhabitants ally him with the civilizers, while Matacoran's ignorance and distrust of white ways mark him out as savage. Once the ships' passengers disembark, their statements and activities further elucidate the difference between the Indians and the settlers. Upon his arrival, Smith immediately enacts a discovery ritual, ordering that his banner, which bears Smith's coat of arms and the motto *Vincere est Vivere, Accordamus* ("Let us agree, to

conquer is to live"), be planted in the soil in the King's name, "where nor force, nor fraud, shall ever root it out again. This goodly land, which the brave Raleigh named from the virgin Queen, we will possess for her successor, the royal James; whom God preserve, and grant a long and prosperous reign over these fair realms" (Custis 1.1.68-73). With word and deed, Smith sanctifies the presence of the new arrivals in a purely European manner. The company then notices an English flag hanging near a cabin on the cliffs. Rolfe notes, "It was no *savage* hand which hung the *English* pennon from the cliffs. Here seems to be a dwelling, and tho' rude, is yet of better structure than the Indian native wigwam" (Custis 1.1.79-82) (emphasis added). Rolfe's lines, referring to Barclay's house, imply the superiority of even the most simple of English structures (architecture influenced by civilization) over the savage wigwam, a seemingly temporary structure comprised of skins and poles. Owen's and Barnes's plays use similar dichotomous language and imagery to solidify a binary opposition between the Indians and the English at the beginning of each script. That this opposition is between two disparate cultures as well as two disparate modes of masculinity is also apparent in the texts and crucial to how Pocahontas functions in each play.

Although the civilized/savage binary informs all Indian dramas, the gendered significance of the binary is sublimated until considered in light of what is represented as the not-quite-savage, not-quite-white Indian princess. In the Pocahontas dramas of the Jacksonian period, there are no male Indians that express any overt desire to assimilate with whites. Custis's play, for example, features the young male Indian Namoutac who is on the ship of settlers who appear at the beginning of the play. He has been to England on a diplomatic mission, but on his homecoming expresses his strong desire to return to the Native life he left behind: "I wish'd to be away from the restraints of civliz'd society, to throw off the cumbrous dress which fetter'd

my limbs, and to re-assume my primitive nakedness and liberty; to enjoy the hunt and the dance, and again become a son of Virginia" (Custis 1.2.89-93). The Indian warrior Paspaho in Owen's play, expresses respect for Smith's honorable ways but never extends that respect into a desire to join his culture. Only Pocahontas is enamored with white culture, literally falling in love with and reproducing it through Rolfe. Pocahontas's exceptionalism, which is echoed in descriptions of her as Powhatan's favorite daughter and in speeches in which colonists describe her, marks her out as something other than Indian but also not quite white. Ultimately, as each play rehearses, the choice of Pocahontas, a Native woman, to aid the colonists in direct opposition to the wishes of the men in her tribe provide both the dramatic climaxes and enable the denouements of colonial triumph. In other words, it is masculine savagery which represents the threat and obstacles to civilization posed by Native culture, with the affiliation of the female savage with white settler culture proving the severity of Native male barbarity and the divine rightness of white settlement. Pocahontas, a woman, is eligible for seduction and takeover as no male Indian can be in this heteronormative matrix; her equation with nation that each play rehearses offers a soothing counter narrative to the cannibalistic Amazons of early explorer narratives and to the savage male Indian. The emphasis on Pocahontas's affiliation with the white settlers cements the two terms of the binary, which, once a woman enters the picture, is more clearly understood as being white, male civilization/red, male savagery.

The plot devices in these plays which equate Native feminine agency with affiliation with white culture mark Pocahontas's third-term status as both similar to and different from that of the white virgin. In choosing the path of virtue that results in heterosexual marriage, the white virgin affiliates with white democratic culture. Similarly, Pocahontas chooses to reproduce the values of settler culture through both The Romance and The Rescue. Pocahontas's affiliation differs

from that of the white virgin in that when the virgin chooses against vice, she chooses in opposition to obvious villainy. The villains of Gothic plays are power-hungry, violent, and destructive. When Pocahontas chooses to affiliate with settler culture, she actively *dis*affiliates from her people. Specifically, she chooses not to reproduce her own father's values and by extension her people's. While the birth of her and Rolfe's son appears only in Barnes's play, audiences acquainted with Pocahontas's life would know that The Romance results in their progeny. Where the suspense surrounding the white virgin lay in whether she will conquer her own innate disorder and choose virtue, the suspense in the Pocahontas plays centers on the question of whether circumstances will allow her to act on her desire to affiliate with the white settlers. There is no question of her desire to affiliate, only whether she can do so successfully. Her failure means the failure of the future of white culture. Even though audiences' familiarity with the story means they almost certainly knew what the outcome would be, the utilization of spectacle in each play to place this outcome in temporary doubt points to what is at stake in Pocahontas's choices.

Each play works differently to illustrate the ways in which Pocahontas's cultural allegiances oscillate between civilized and savage. The Pocahontas of Custis's play, for example, shows her attraction to white culture both in her rejection of her Native fiancée, the warrior Matacoran, and her conversion to Christianity, the rejection of the former she explains as being connected to the adoption of the latter: "Matacoran is brave, yet he lacks the best attribute of courage—mercy. Since the light of the Christian doctrine has shone on my before benighted soul, I have learn'd that mercy is one of the attributes of the divinity I now adore" (1.2.40-44). As she leaves Barclay's hut to return to her father's home at Werecomoco, she says, "Adieu, good father Barclay—soon will I be here again; for I am nowhere so happy as under this

hospitable roof" (Custis 1.2.128-130). The honorific "father" that she attributes to Barclay signifies her divided allegiances, as she has also referred (rightfully) to Powhatan as her father, and will later apply the same honorific to Smith in a conversation with Rolfe.

The two most crucial elements of the Pocahontas myth that both illustrate and depend on her third-term status, and which all the plays discussed here include as major plot devices, are The Rescue and The Romance.[47] Both of these events markedly separate Pocahontas from her people. Although they result neither in her forceful ejection from her community nor a full conversion to whiteness, they mark a distinct disaffiliation from her people and, more importantly, their cultural values. An Indian woman's romance with a white settler (and, by extension, that settler's culture and beliefs) is an act of affiliation that serves to mark the settler culture as superior. While both plot devices are always present, commentary on the plays by twentieth and twenty-first-century scholars focus on the representation of The Rescue as being indicative of Pocahontas's role in enabling white conquest.[48] Discussion of how playwrights integrate The Romance often surrounds the dramaturgical inconvenience that Pocahontas does not ultimately marry Smith.[49] Alternatively, the analysis often turns to how the portrayal of the courtship between Pocahontas and Rolfe negotiates or avoids the overriding concern with miscegenation that so absorbed nineteenth-century United States culture and politics. While these are worthwhile discussions, I argue that both plot devices are equally critical. The Rescue portrays only a single instance of a damsel (who places herself) in distress; through the device of The Romance, Pocahontas puts herself in danger to save the colonists a second time. This

[47] In most cases Pocahontas falls in love with Rolfe. The exception to this is John Brougham's 1855 burlesque of the legend, where Smith is Pocahontas's love interest. Other plays, such as Owens', imply that Smith may have had feelings for Pocahontas that went unrequited.
[48] See Jones, Tilton, and Blevins Faery, cited throughout this chapter.
[49] An exception to this is Rayna Green's article, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," *The Massachusetts Review* 16.4 (Summer 1975).

second rescue, as originally narrated by Smith in his *Generall Historie*, has nothing to do with Rolfe, whom the actual Pocahontas would not meet until the time of her abduction in 1613. Smith describes how, sometime after The Rescue, Pocahontas comes to warn him of a plot between the Dutch and Powhatan to kill the English colonists:

> Notwithstanding the eternall all-seeing Got did prevent him [Powhatan], and by a strange meanes. For *Pocahontas* his dearest jewell and daughter, in that darke night came through the irksome woods, and told our Captaine great cheare should be sent us by and by: but *Powhatan* and all the power he could make, would after come kill us all, if they that brought it could not kill us with our owne weapons when we were at supper. Therefore if we would live shee wished us presently to bee gone. Such things as shee delighted in, he [Smith] would have given her: but with the tears running downe her cheeks, shee said shee durst not be seene to have any: for if *Powhatan* should know it, she were but dead, and so shee ranne away by herselfe as she came. (Smith, *Generall* 77-78) (original emphasis)

As with the first Rescue, Smith relates the proceedings with relatively spare language and detail. Playwrights, however, recognize the dramatic potential in both instances. All of the Pocahontas playwrights, including those not analyzed here, devise this second rescue (even when, as with Custis, it happens first) as happening similarly to how Smith describes it but as intertwined with The Romance. In doing so, they double the opportunities for Pocahontas to support the settler cause while also laying the foundation for the story's end to in some way resemble the historical account in which Pocahontas actually marries Rolfe.

There are at least three reasons for playwrights to include The Romance when The Rescue is the ostensible core of the legend. The first two reasons are practical. As in other

exigencies in adaptations of the myth for the stage, there is the dramaturgical consideration that in Smith's chronology, The Rescue, an ostensibly climactic event, occurs rather early in the sequence of events. Pocahontas's story, as far as nineteenth-century Americans were concerned, began with her intervention in Smith's execution. Where, then, can a full-length drama go from there? Focusing the plot on the Romance provides a pattern by which to construct a play. The second practical reason has to do with audience expectations. Then, as now, plotlines between young unmarried lovers dominated popular entertainment. The question of whether the cruel world will allow something as pure as first love to survive and thus perpetuate the rituals preceding reproduction dominated the imaginations of theatregoers. The hugely successful nineteenth-century playwright Dion Boucicault comments on the necessity for this plot line when discussing the limitations of his play *Daddy O'Dowd* in a letter to his friend A. C. Wheeler: "The weakness of the Drama lies in the subject which depends on the development of paternal feeling—Such sentiment may fill a one act piece—but three (in these commonplace times) wants a love interest with a more *procreative* aspect" (Boucicault, Letter) (emphasis added, underlining in original). Smith and Pocahontas, due to the knowledge of her eventual marriage to Rolfe, can only have a paternal relationship; to retain its appeal, The Romance needs to be the real focus of the drama.

A less practical analysis reveals different possibilities. Although taking enough license with history in many instances, the Jacksonian playwrights cling to the historical reality of Pocahontas's relationship with Rolfe rather than Smith. They were apparently satisfied with changes in chronology and characterization and with the inclusion of anachronisms (such as Smith and Rolfe being in Jamestown at the same time). There also seem to be no qualms with eliminating important events such as the true circumstances of Pocahontas's abduction or the fact

that she probably met Rolfe while in captivity, not in accidental and romantic meetings while freely walking through the forest as the plays depict. Why, then, insist on Rolfe as the recipient of Pocahontas's affections rather than Smith, on whose personal behalf she intervenes, whereas her second rescue, although motivated by her romantic love, saves the entire colony from an ambush? The retention of this dramaturgical complication, I argue, is about more than a desire for historical accuracy. When Pocahontas saves Smith, she saves a leader, a larger-than-life hero who has the specific mission of laying claim to land in the king's name. Smith is not an eligible bachelor; he is married to his cause. Rolfe, in his youth and bravery, represents the ideals of settler culture. By saving Rolfe and his compatriots, Pocahontas preserves more than just the colony. Through their union, Pocahontas will help reproduce and proliferate white values and American citizens. In reality, Rolfe owned a plantation in Virginia. He was rooted there, settled, unlike Smith who returned to England. When the real Rolfe and the real Pocahontas (then called Rebecca) had a son, they began a genealogy of truly "native" origin. Smith was the head of the mission, Rolfe its heart—these exigencies are symbolized in the near-cudgeling of Smith's brains and the motivation of love that fuels Pocahontas's actions toward Rolfe.[50]

Connected to the inclusion of The Rescue and The Romance is the convention in each play that Pocahontas is a young virgin of marriageable age, like her white counterparts in chapter one. Both the Rescue and the Romance are enabled because all of the plays portray Pocahontas as sexually mature. Even in Smith's questionable account, Pocahontas is said to be about eleven, with her marriage to Rolfe occurring seven years later. In the plays she is sexually available

[50] That Pocahontas's and Rolfe's relationship is portrayed as consensual contrasts with how relations between white masculinity and black femininity are formulated in the figure of the mixed-race slave woman. This crucial difference informs the analysis of the distresses of citizenship that form the subject of chapter three.

from the beginning, eroticizing the theme of affiliation that drives these two crucial plot points.[51] Dramaturgically speaking her increased age allows events to be truncated that would otherwise require a span of years to elapse. In addition to this practicality, however, elevating Pocahontas to an age of sexual maturity connects her to the masculine activity of conquest and its depiction as a takeover of vulnerable virgin land. Sexuality connects Pocahontas to European notions of femininity not available to her if depicted as a child. Goeman notes that in the wake of first contact, "The relationships among Native peoples and between others begin to be ordered along gender, sexuality, and racial regimes that exert power and bring into being sets of social, political, and economic relationships" (3). Pocahontas's femininity, based in sexual maturity, makes her part of a gendered and racialized matrix in which her actions make sense according to accepted European gender norms. Similar norms, as I argue in chapter one, enable the reproduction of the white heterosexual family unit that in turn enabled the reproduction of capitalist economic relations. The colonial project, as Murphy and others remind us, was always a commercial endeavor (Murphy 24). Emphasizing Pocahontas's maturity and the ultimate expression of it as alliance with white settler culture, I argue, can also serve to define Native masculinity as unallied with white ways, here judged as contrary to the civilizing process. Presenting Pocahontas as a woman of marriageable age makes her eligible for the European institution of marriage. Historically, her marriage to Rolfe resulted in a period of peace which did indeed assist the establishment of white settlement culture. In the plays, this union is proof of the rightness of white culture's New World presence in the first place.

Several Pocahontas dramas contextualize the courtship between Rolfe and Pocahontas by including sub-plots in which white couples court and fall in love. Barker's 1808 play initiates

[51] This convention survived into the 20th century, apparent when Disney depicted Pocahontas as a voluptuous and adult woman in their 1995 animated film.

this convention, and Owen and Barnes duplicate it. While these story lines strike one as superfluous and seem to function primarily as comic relief, they do serve to liken Pocahontas to virginal white women. Although somewhat comic, playwrights always represent the white women of the Pocahontas dramas from within the framework of ideal white femininity; namely, as sexually available and somewhat dangerous, but also always virtuous. This convention offers audiences a matrix through which to read the interracial union between Rolfe and Pocahontas that distances it somewhat from the much feared mixing of black and white races prevalent in this era (Tilton 59). Significantly, the only playwright to avoid this convention is Custis. He has no female characters in his play that are not also Indians. This, I argue, highlights the aggressive tone of his play and emphasizes its focus on the legend as one that proves the superiority of civilized over savage culture.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that the Pocahontas dramas share many dramaturgical and ideological similarities. Since part of my overall project is to recognize the subtle differences in various representations of familiar tropes, I now turn to how the playwrights create a unique depiction of Pocahontas that highlights the pressing exigencies of the historical moment in which their plays emerge. For Custis, settlement is won by virtue of white superiority, both cultural and military, and echoes the Jacksonian rhetoric of Jackson's early presidency. In Owen, expansion is a given, and as a social issue, is secondary to the reformist ideals dominating his era. Finally, in Barnes's play, violent expansion figures rhetorically as inevitable: a reality implied by the vanishing Indian of the 1840s, as Americans acquired more lands and Native Americans fell before the unyielding wave of westward expansion. The varying dramatizations of The Rescue and The Romance reflect the disparate interpretations of

Manifest Destiny in these plays, which in turn determine how Pocahontas's interstitial femininity effects each play.

iii. Custis's Pocahontas and the Rationale of Indian Removal: Manifest Destiny Justified

In Act one Scene one of Custis's play, the same scene in which Smith stages the discovery ritual of planting his banner, Smith prepares his men for the next day's task, which is to present gifts to the chief Powhatan and enact a coronation ritual in the name of King James. He says to his men, "tomorrow on to the savage court, where we will invest his heathen majesty with the crown and mantle sent to him by the Lord's anointed; then demand, on behalf of our gracious sovereign, dominion in and over the countries from the mountains to the sea, and if denied us—why then—Dieu et mon droit—For God and our right" (Custis 1.1.152-157). This statement ends the scene, and so Smith does not elaborate on how the soldiers might claim what they clearly see as God-given rights to the land. Smith's status as a military captain, however, and the insinuation that the request regarding the land is made out of politeness rather than necessity, imply that battle would ensue in the event of Powhatan's denial. Smith's attitude in Custis's play reflects the attitude of the Jacksonian party, which was itself the dominant party in 1830. Premiering at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia on January 16, 1830, the opening of Custis's play preceded Congress's passing of the Indian Removal Act by only four months (it passed on May 28, 1830). While the Act gave President Jackson the authority to negotiate removal treaties with Native tribes, this "negotiation" often took the form of coercion through starvation or violence (Garrison 188). The aggressive tactics to which Smith obliquely refers in the above passage echo attitudes of many of Custis's contemporaries, who felt that the Christian

faith mandated their right to expand, and that Native resistance to this right could ethically, and now legally, be met with violence.

Unlike Owen and Barnes, Custis chooses to alter the chronology of the legend and place The Rescue in the final scene of the play. This change and the play's other events allow Pocahontas to fall totally and completely in love with the settlers and their cause, effecting a more dramatic conversion toward civilization than exists in the other plays. In this version, then, it is The Romance that precipitates The Rescue, so it is in that order that I will discuss how they occur in Custis's adaptation. Pocahontas meets Rolfe in the scene directly following that in which we learn that she is already a Christian convert and is attracted to Barclay's stories about English life. We have also learned here that Pocahontas is betrothed to the mighty Matacoran, whom she disdains for his savagery. The first line of the scene where Rolfe and Pocahontas meet takes place in the forest, which, as I discuss above regarding colonial perceptions of the American wilderness, can be read as a symbol or site of colonial anxiety. Rolfe's first lines reflect this: "I am completely lost amid the mazes of this interminable wood" (1.3.1-2). Rolfe's geographical disorientation ends when Pocahontas enters. Her allure, which poses a similar danger and promise to men as that of the white virgin, disorients Rolfe in a different way. Upon her exit, Rolfe acknowledges both that he is smitten and that Pocahontas represents something he has not yet encountered—a savage with all the appeal of the civilized: "How full of grace and courtesy this princess—savage should I say. By my faith, and such be the damsels of the savage court, we shall need all the advantages of our civilization when we appear before them" (Custis 1.3.61-64). When one of Rolfe's colleagues enters, having shot a deer, and asks for a description of Pocahontas, Rolfe replies: "let me say, that tho' of dark complexion, she is well favour'd both in form and feature, of admir'd carriage, courteous and discreet in discourse" (93-95). In other

words, despite her Native ancestry, her manners resemble those of a white woman. For Rolfe, in Custis's play, these two opposing subjectivities in the same body create a mixture of the familiar and exotic that is extremely attractive to him.

The significance of this first meeting between Rolfe and Pocahontas in Custis's play is that it precipitates Rolfe's rescue of Pocahontas in Act two Scene four, which itself nudges Pocahontas from infatuation into love and prepares the way for The Rescue. Barclay, the old Englishman, receives word that Powhatan has sent the Indian Namoutac to detain Pocahontas and her female companion, Omaya.[52] Thinking she may be in danger, Barclay tells Rolfe about the threat, informing him that the ambush is set to occur at the old oak tree that was the site of Rolfe and Pocahontas's first meeting. Rolfe lays in wait in a huge hole in the side of the enormous tree. When Namoutac tries to abscond with Pocahontas, Rolfe saves her by firing at Namoutac with his pistol; at the sound of the shot, Namoutac flees in terror (a common Indian reaction to gunfire in these dramas). When Pocahontas expresses her gratitude, Rolfe demurs, saying "the gentle fawn of Virginia need fear no panther when the lion of England doth guard her on her way" (2.4.50-51). Rolfe's gallantry and display of superior weaponry win Pocahontas's allegiance.

This allegiance is crucial when, in Act two Scene six, Pocahontas overhears a conversation between Powhatan and Matacoran (Pocahontas's savage betrothed) that reveals their plan to ambush the settlers while they sleep. Pocahontas must now make a choice—ally with her people, or save the settlers? Pocahontas quickly decides that she cannot be loyal to her people if they plan to betray the white men. At this moment of crisis, as in the Gothic plays,

[52] Barclay knows only of this plan and interprets it as Pocahontas being in danger. He later learns that she was being detained to keep her from interfering in an ambush on the English planned by Powhatan. This fact becomes important later in the play.

spectacle underscores the high stakes of the unfolding events; as Pocahontas makes her choice, a flash of lightning brightens the stage. Realizing that the river is her only hope of reaching the English, she expresses doubt of her ability to navigate it: "how will these little hands, us'd only to guide the canoe in sportive race on a smooth and glassy surface, wage its struggling way, when raging billows uprear their foamy crests" (Custis 2.6.120-123). She quickly finds solace in her regard for Rolfe: "Brave English, gallant courteous Rolfe. (*Thunder*). . . . English Rolfe I will save thee, or Pocahontas be no more" (124, 127). Pocahontas, clearly invested in the identity afforded her by her relationship to the English, resolves to face danger in order to make the right decision. This act of disaffiliation, precipitated by her earlier conversion to Christianity, is the first time the audience sees her actively work against her own people. The storm that may keep her from warning the settlers in time can be understood as symbolic of the challenge of overcoming her own savagery to reach the light of civilization. Pocahontas, whom the audience would have seen struggling in an actual canoe over actual waves on stage, does indeed reach Rolfe and the other English in time to warn them. Her timely warning allows Rolfe and Smith to fall back and formulate an assault on the Indians. Quinn notes that the Walnut Street Theatre was closed "for several days, on account of the elaborate preparations that were being made for the performance" (Quinn 272). One can imagine the spectacle surrounding a lone woman in a canoe in the midst of a brutal storm, propelled by the cause of God and her love for Rolfe, and the effect of this on the audience.

In the course of the battle, both Smith and Matacoran, in separate scenes, are taken prisoner. Smith is brought by his Indian captors to Powhatan, who has been joined by Pocahontas. Powhatan, who, throughout the entire play, expresses time and again his wish that these "formidable invaders" might be expelled from his kingdom (Custis 2.3.39-40), orders

Smith's execution. As in Smith's *Generall Historie* and all subsequent plays on the subject, a stone is brought out and Smith's head is laid upon it. The actual execution is delayed, first by Powhatan granting Smith the right to say some final words, and second by Pocahontas's pleading. Unmoved by either Smith's lack of fear in the face of death or Pocahontas's entreaties, Powhatan gives the final of three signals for the executioners to deliver the death blow. As the executioners raise their clubs, Pocahontas, "rising with dignity," according to the stage directions, intones a speech that threatens complete rejection of her father and her people:

> Cruel king, the ties of blood which bound me to thee are dissever'd, as have been long those of thy sanguinary religion; for know that I have adjur'd thy senseless gods, and now worship the Supreme Being, the true Manitou, and the Father of the Universe; 'tis his Almighty hand that sustains me, 'tis his divine spirit that breathes in my soul, and prompts Pocahontas to a deed which future ages will admire. (Custis 3.4.158-164)

After this speech, Pocahontas rushes down to throw her head on that of Smith's and calls for the executioners to strike, placing herself in danger a second time for the sake of the English. Powhatan immediately calls off the executioners, unwilling to lose his daughter. In thanks for her intervention, Smith gives Pocahontas a gold chain, which another Englishman says should bind Rolfe and Pocahontas. Pocahontas agrees, saying she will "cheerfully submit to wear the chain which binds her to the honour'd master of her fate, even tho' the chain were iron instead of gold" (3.5.198-200). Pocahontas's devotion to Rolfe is clearly fervid.

Once the alliance between Rolfe and Pocahontas has been declared, Matacoran is brought in as a prisoner of the English. The events of The Romance and The Rescue have made clear, in no uncertain terms, that the tide has turned against the Indians in this story. Matacoran, defeated,

acknowledges his hatred of the whites while admitting their military superiority. In a speech emblematic of the Noble Savage, he concedes that "Now that he can no longer combat the invaders he will retire before them, even to where tradition says, there rolls a western wave" (Custis 3.5.227-228). Powhatan accepts his bravest warrior's admission of defeat, admitting that "experience makes even an Indian wise" (240). Powhatan, the symbol of Native sovereignty, concludes the play by condoning his daughter's marriage and, with it, acceding to the inevitability of English settlement guaranteed, in this play at least, by their show of superior might and masculine prowess:

> Aye, and let their union be a pledge to the future union between England and Virginia. And mine the privilege of giving away the bride.[53] And may the fruits of this union of virtue and honor, be a long line of descendants, inheriting those principles, gifted with rare talents, and the most exalted patriotism. Now it only remains for us to say, that looking thro' a big vista of futurity, to the time when these wild regions shall become the ancient and honour'd part of a great and glorious American Empire, may we hope that when the tales of early days are told from the nursery, the library, or the stage, that kindly will be receiv'd *the national story of Pocahontas, or the Settlement of Virginia*. (3.5.47-259) (emphasis added)

Custis's rendition of events is a clear changing of the guard, in which the white settlers have the upper hand. The trajectory of this play creates a straight line between Pocahontas's disaffiliation of her people, her infatuation with white culture and white religion, and political justification of the Indian Removal Act.

[53] Powhatan did not attend the actual wedding of Rolfe and Pocahontas/Rebecca.

iv. Owen's Pocahontas *as Reform Drama: Manifest Destiny Assumed*

Owen's play, written in 1837 and performed in 1838 at the Park Theatre in New York, focuses more obviously on Owen's reform politics than on justifying the Manifest Destiny agenda. Owen, like many associated with the Reform movements of the late 1830s through the 1850s, feared the degeneration of American society through such evils as poverty, prostitution, slavery. He was one of the small population of men opposed to gender inequality. Owen was also, ostensibly, sympathetic to the injustices enacted against Native Americans (Lombard v). As Christopher Castiglia explains, "Reformers saw structural inequalities arising from the coercion of labor, the unequal distribution of profit and opportunity, and the legal disenfranchisement of classes of citizens, and the stultifying aridity of conventional domesticity" (7). In many ways, the play serves as a vehicle for Owen's personal politics, especially his support of gender equality and opposition to the mistreatment of Native Americans. Despite his progressive politics, however, there is an unexamined commitment to expansionism throughout his play, which Smith, who is portrayed as more honorable in his dealings with the Natives in this play than in any other version, espouses even as he models "fair" ways to deal with the obstacle presented by the Indians. In answering his fellow colonists as to why they should not abandon the struggling colony of Jamestown and return to England, Smith replies:

> Albeit this land conceals not, in *her* bosom,
> Rich mine of gold, or bed of orient pearl;
> . . .
> Yet *she* is blessed with better riches—such
> As make a nation prosperous and great:

With soil, as rich as India's self can boast;

Forests, might build a navy for the world;

And noble rivers, an untamed highway,

Down whose wide-spreading waters, in rude craft,

The wealth of provinces may safely glide.

A sun, that's warm and bright; a territory,

That stretches from tropic to pole.

Needs but *the hand of industry, and here*

Cities may rise, shall rival Europe's marts,

And States spring up, shall, one day, bear away

The palm of greatness from the Eastern World. (Owen 55) (emphasis added)

This patriotic speech touts the ripeness of the land for the commercial motives of civilization, stating essentially that this land is too rich to abandon either to savage neglect or avaricious Europe. Nowhere does Owen offer a criticism of this vision. He does occasionally comment on the deceitful means the non-English Europeans in the play choose to pursue this expansionist vision, but not the agenda itself. Even so, rather than creating sympathy for the Natives or making an argument for the rights of Natives to defend their lands from invasion, Owen's criticism of the deceitful means of conquest more commonly serve to highlight Smith's heroism and nobility than provide any room for Native agency.

In stark contrast to Custis's version, Owen's adaptation avoids the aggressive assertions of white superiority and the righteous mandate of what one encyclopedist describes as Jackson's "spreadeagle [sic] expansion" (Feller 203). If anything, Owen's play criticizes the violence and dishonorable deceit often associated with aggressive expansionism. He does not, however,

criticize the expansionist agenda, merely the mode by which some of his era chose to carry it out. The way in which The Rescue and The Romance play out suggests that Indian culture can be brought to accept the inherent superiority of white culture. Owen argues this can occur if white culture models that superiority through stewardship to the lesser native and by showing respect for his ways, savagely inferior though they are. Pocahontas's interventions in this play act as a cultural bridge, easing the inevitable assimilation of Indians with white culture rather than demanding it at gun point. While this paternalism still smacks of white racial arrogance, it is at least motivated by compassion and a desire for improvement.

Owen's Pocahontas, unlike Custis's, is not divided from her culture. She has not yet converted to Christianity, nor does she show disdain for Native men as Custis's Pocahontas does of Matacoran. She does not even espouse any particular infatuation with the white settlers, other than referring to them as "wondrous strangers" in the first scene in which she appears, which is not until Act two Scene one. The entirety of the first act concentrates on the dissension building in the colony and a seemingly frivolous courtship between a male and female colonist. The Rescue occurs in Act two Scene three, in which we learn, through Smith's words, that this is the first time he has ever spoken to Pocahontas. Before the execution scene, Smith is brought in as a prisoner. He stalls for time, pulling out his compass in an apparent attempt to impress the Indians with this seemingly magical device that moves without being touched. When Smith displays it, Pocahontas exclaims excitedly, "It moves! It lives!" (Owen 87). While awed and curious, the male Indians are not won over. Instead, they rehearse wrongs committed by Smith and his men against them. In the midst of this condemnation, Smith, without explanation, approaches Pocahontas and attempts to put a chain around her neck. Powhatan, fearing sorcery, dashes the chain from Smith's hands. Powhatan calls for a vote amongst male Natives in

attendance as to whether Smith should live or die; they unanimously choose death. On hearing this, Smith approaches Pocahontas, telling her:

> Rather for thy sake, maiden, than my own,
> There's something I would say. It is the first—
> 'Twill be the last word I shall ever speak
> To thee. I've fought against thy nation—slain
> Some of thy countrymen; and, if thou wilt,
> I am thy nation's foe. Yet never—never—
> In word or deed—by art of sorcery—
> Or in aught else, have I conspired against
> Thy life or welfare. If we ever meet
> In some bright Land of Spirits, there thoul't know
> That I have spoken truth. (Owen 91)

Somehow, the combination of the compass (a tool of conquest), the chain (a product of European metallurgy), and Smith's personal appeal impresses Pocahontas, and she chooses to interpose herself between Smith and the executioner's raised club. She looks appealingly at Powhatan, who will not relent. True to legend, Pocahontas vows "Then take my life too!" and lays her head on Smith's. When the executioner hesitates, she protests, "Fearest thou a woman? Strike!"[54] Predictably, Powhatan calls off the executioner, saying to Pocahontas, "His life is thine!" (91).

[54] With her rhetorical "Fearest thou a woman?" and other references in Act two Scene one (Pocahontas refers to herself and her sister as "two silly girls" when comparing their archery skills to the warrior Paspaho's, for example; at the end of that scene, the term "Squaw" is also used as an insult toward a man), Pocahontas introduces a gender hierarchy in the Native culture. Her willingness to defy masculine authority becomes more significant when coming from a subaltern position, and is perhaps Owen's way, given his feminist leanings, of showing how women can have more honor than men.

The Rescue is what facilitates Pocahontas's arrival at Jamestown and her subsequent meeting of Rolfe. Although Smith's actions in The Rescue imply he has romantic feelings for Pocahontas, Owen makes it clear that she does not return these feelings. When her sister, Nomony, expresses confusion that Pocahontas would risk her life to save someone she does not love, Pocahontas replies "He would have done the same—and more—for me. . . . I love to call him / My father" (Owen 105). While this will prove disappointing to Smith, whose position as the unrequited lover adds to his tragic pathos in the play, Owen and his audiences know that history demands the union of Rolfe and Pocahontas. The Romance blossoms in Act four Scene one. Importantly, the scene suggests that Pocahontas falls in love with white culture as part of falling in love with Rolfe. The scene features Pocahontas, Smith, Nomony, and Rolfe. The two sisters have apparently spent several days at the fort in Jamestown, but where Nomony seems eager to go home, but Pocahontas wishes to stay. Perhaps to distract Nomony from her desire to go, Rolfe shows Nomony how he "can speak to those he never saw" (139). In other words, he introduces them to the magic of writing words on paper. The maidens are enraptured by what they call "speaking leaves" (a designation that implies that although they interact with white cultural tools they do so as uneducated Indians). When Rolfe informs Pocahontas that in Europe there exist systems by which "distant tribes" carry messages on paper over great distances, Pocahontas is overjoyed, exclaiming "Oh! If I could but cross that Great Salt Lake!" (145). Rolfe asks her, "Wilt thou go with me-- / With thy white brother?" (145). Pocahontas's reply is to give him her hand in answer, a telling show of physical affection.

Once Smith and Rolfe leave the "speaking leaf" scene, Pocahontas tells her sister how much her time in Jamestown has changed her. Pocahontas, who has never before been moved to love (revealed by Owen in Act two Scene one) now feels the urge to join her life with a man, but

not in the way her people apparently do so: "Is't not good to feel / Something within, that tells me, I am born / To aid, but not to slave; to stand beside, / Not crouch behind, the Chief who says he loves me?" (Owen 149). Nomony answers, "I am content to / Prepare a hunter's meal; care for his children; If need be, till his field. Our mother labored / Thus for our father; and she surely knew / What it was right to do" (149). Rather than take up the debate, Pocahontas changes the subject, asking Nomony if she will join her in hunting a deer. Relieved, Nomony replies: "Ay! that's better far, / Than nurse such strange and Yangeese phantastics" (150).[55] Unlike Nomomy, Pocahontas sees in Rolfe, and his culture, the opportunity to be *more* in some way, to enjoy status denied even to her, the favorite of Powhatan's daughters. She sees a relationship with Rolfe as fulfilling in a way she never imagined a relationship with someone from her own clan could be.

Owen clearly has no anthropological or historical basis for his interpreting Native gender relations the way in which they are presented in this play. Rather, his representation shows to what degree erroneous assumptions of Native American culture saturate this and other nineteenth-century authors' works. Sarah M. Pearsall, a contemporary Native theorist, laments this common misconception that Native women had no agency or important role in Native cultures. She notes, for example, that "Indian women played prominent roles—as leaders, as captives, as mediators—in just about every war fought in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North America, as well as many later ones" (Pearsall 58). Complicating Owen's misunderstanding is the consideration that he utilizes them not to create malicious stereotypes but to protest misogyny in general. Owen, influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft (Lombard vi) and drawing on false assumptions of Native gender relations, such as those found in Jefferson's

[55] "Yangeese" is the term Indians in this play use to refer to white settlers.

Notes on the State of Virginia, uses these assumptions to criticize unfair gender relations in his own culture. The use of uninformed assumptions of Native cultures to comment on white culture is a common theme in all of these plays.

Pocahontas's budding love for Rolfe and the personal appeal of his culture sway her allegiance when, as in Custis's play, she overhears her father's plans to ambush the white settlement. Unlike Custis's play, however, this treachery is motivated by the Dutch settlers' dissatisfaction with Smith's leadership, an episode Smith relates in his *Generall Historie*. The message is, perhaps, that bad, white male behavior influences the less culturally sophisticated Indians to act unwisely. Fearing for the colonists, Pocahontas dashes off to warn them, again in the midst of a raging storm. The scene shifts to reveal Rolfe and Smith in a tent in the forest, trying to shelter from the storm as lightning flashes and thunder rolls. Rolfe looks out and sees a human form, immediately after which he sees a tree bough crash to the ground, apparently on top of the person. He rushes out of sight, leaving the audience to wonder who has been killed, if perhaps it was Pocahontas, or if perhaps Rolfe is walking into a trap. Suspense ends when Rolfe returns with Pocahontas. When he remarks that he feared the bough had struck her she replies "Heards't ever of an Indian / Kill'd by a falling bough? He must have lost / His eyes first" (Owen 164). Like the canoeing skills that lead Pocahontas to success in Custis's play, Owen's Pocahontas draws on her Native knowledge of her environment to intervene on behalf of the civilizers.

In a departure from other adaptations, Owen follows the second rescue with Pocahontas's capture by the Dutch colonists. Whereas this was actually enacted by English colonists, Owen's alteration of the history better serves his thematic purposes. In having the Dutch keep Pocahontas captive at Jamestown, he gives Smith the opportunity to denounce dishonorable war

practices. Revealing his attitude towards Natives as being that of a steward toward his ward, he says to Pocahontas's captors, "What virtues they will learn of their white neighbors! / How they will venerate Christian morality, / And English honor, gallantry, good faith, / When they shall learn, that she, to whom we owe our very lives--" (191). Smith, flabbergasted by this treachery, cannot complete his sentence. Through Smith, Owen moralizes about underhanded interactions with Native Americans. Far from questioning the rightness of the hierarchy of superiority and inferiority implied by the civilized/savage binary, Owen merely protests these men's bad behavior in this instance. Owen's paternalism replaces the overt commitment to Manifest Destiny in the other plays without, however, disavowing it.

v. Barnes's Oracular Pocahontas: Manifest Destiny Prophesied

By the time Charlotte Barnes's play appears in Philadelphia on February 16, 1848, a new focus on westward expansion, enabled by the acquisition of Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico, returned Manifest Destiny to the forefront of representations of the Pocahontas legend. In the first ten lines of the play, the character John Ratliffe, President of the colonial council of Jamestown, rehearses how improvement of the land gives them right to it: "There stands complete the first abodes by hands / Of British artisans upreared, upon / The Paspaheghes' land—the settlement / Of fair Virginia. And by full consent / Of this good council, we shall call the fort / And dwellings, James Town, honouring the king / By whose commission we explore these lands" (Barnes 1.1.3-9). The discovery ritual of improvement completed, Smith goes on to announce the divinely mandated mission to continue this improvement throughout the land: "bold ambition calls / To lead through forests vast the arts and faith / Of polished, civilized life—

like pioneers, / To hew a road to Glory's farthest goal, / And write on her imperishable page / The op'ning chapter of a nation's story" (Barnes 1.1.31-36). Smith and the other English colonists rehearse this proclamation repeatedly throughout the play. While all three plays rehearse a theme of white expansion, Barnes's play resonates with the resurgent commitment to it that arose as Americans pushed ever farther westward.

In *The Forest Princess,* there is evidence of both an optimistic belief in the rightness of Manifest Destiny encouraged by the acquisition of the western territories from Texas to California and the more pessimistic belief in the inevitability of the disappearance of the Native American from those territories. Barnes follows the legend's chronology, placing The Rescue early in the play's plot. Smith, having come with his men to present Powhatan with gifts and enact a coronation, is taken prisoner rather than welcomed in friendship. The action quickly moves to the scene of execution, with Pocahontas attempting to intervene. Powhatan ignores her, saying "Get thee hence; / Our chiefs admit not of women's councils" (Barnes 1.3.97-98). Like Owen's Pocahontas, however, Barnes's heroine is courageous and exhibits her exceptionalism by not demurring to this dismissal. Utilizing western logic, Pocahontas attempts to reason with Powhatan in lengthy rhetorical speeches. Powhatan is, of course, unyielding, until Pocahontas places her body between Smith and the executioner, preventing the blow. Powhatan calls a hold and then turns to her, saying with admiration, "Thou art a worthy daughter of thy race-- / A warrior's Spirit in a woman's form" (1.3.147-148). Barnes goes to great pains in this scene to mark Pocahontas out as something between maiden and warrior, as an interstitial agent whose femininity gives her access to the compassion that motivates her intervention and the courage that enables it. The respect this earns her from Powhatan will influence the playing out of The Romance.

The kinship that arises between Smith and Pocahontas as a result of The Rescue prompts the second rescue, wherein Pocahontas rushes to Jamestown to warn the colonists of the planned ambush. In a departure from other adaptations, it is in the act of trying to deliver this warning that Pocahontas meets Rolfe. Rolfe, who, earlier in the scene, confessed himself to be "half in love" with Pocahontas just from hearing of The Rescue, sees her approach (Barnes 2.1.85). He also sees the panther that stalks her. Acting quickly, he shoots the panther, saving Pocahontas from its deathly intent. Pocahontas is grateful and rewards Rolfe with a necklace, which she says will protect him if ever he is in trouble with the Indians. Pocahontas then tells Rolfe of her need to warn Smith of the ambush, after which a battle ensues with the Indians.

The severity of the battle and the seemingly endless numbers of the English ultimately lead the Indians to concede defeat. This is also motivated by the enemy's capture of Pocahontas, in exchange for whose freedom Powhatan agrees to sign a peace treaty. The attitude of defeat is eloquently expressed by the warrior Opachisco:

> More ships—arms—food—more men! 'Tis vain to strive.
> Like swollen streams they gain upon the land,
> And one day will possess it. Yes, I hear
> My father's prophesying spirit speak
> In the low moanings of the forest trees:
> He bids me end a struggle useless now:
> The red man's portion is—decay! (Barnes 2.3.107-113)

The defeatist tone of this speech morphs into a strange kind of optimism expressed by Powhatan upon agreeing to allow Pocahontas to marry Rolfe. His attitude appears to be that since white victory is inevitable, at least Pocahontas's union will mean she survives when the others will not.

To Rolfe he says, “Thou / Wilt love, protect her, when her father’s eyes / Are closed, her kindred driven from the earth, / As soon they will be, ‘neath the crushing strides of thy vast nation” (Barnes 2.4.201-205). In Custis’s play, Powhatan appears to regard the impending marriage with optimism, whereas the Powhatan of Owen’s play displays diplomatic tolerance of the union. The defeatist tone of Barnes’ Powhatan communicates an acceptance of the eventual disappearance of Native Americans, a fate more final than defeat. Barnes does not seem to critique the genocidal implications of Powhatan’s attitude, implying an assumption of its rightness professed by Americans committed wholeheartedly to the right of white culture to completely possess the United States.

Where the other plays end at this point of colonial victory, Barnes’s play continues on to the point of Pocahontas’s death in England. Ostensibly following the historical saga to its logical end, Barnes also turns Pocahontas’s death scene into one final fervent affirmation of Native acquiescence to American destiny. In Barnes’s version of Pocahontas’s death, Pocahontas has a prophetic vision that foretells the inevitable and divinely-inspired settlement of America by European descendants. The vision begins with “a strain of invisible music” as clouds gather and then disperse to display a view of the ship on which Pocahontas was to sail back to Virginia. This view gradually transforms to “the mouth of the James River with its forest, its rude fort, and wigwams” (Barnes 262). Pocahontas’s father Powhatan stands on the shore, awaiting the approaching ship’s arrival. The clouds disperse a bit more to reveal a collection of allegorical figures—George Washington, Christopher Columbus (“the Genius of Columbia” according to the stage directions), Time, Peace, the Lion and the Eagle. A mist arises to obscure these figures, and the scene returns to normal. As the music dies away, Pocahontas “awakens suddenly, and exclaims”:

---No, ‘tis no dream! (As if endowed with temporary strength she starts up clasping her hands in thankfulness.)

Souls of the prophet-fathers of my race,

Light from the Land of Spirits have sent

To paint *the future* on my mental sight.

Like the Great River of far Wester[n] wilds,

Improvement’s course, *unebbing* [original emphasis], shall flow on.

From that beloved soil where I drew breath

Shall noble chiefs arise. But one o’er all,

By heaven named to set a nation free,

I hear the universal world declare,

In shouts whose echo centuries prolong,

“The Father of his Country” O’er the path

Of Ages, I behold Time leading Peace.

By ties of love and language bound, I see

The Island-Mother and her Giant Child,

Their arms extend across the narrowing seas,

The grasp of lasting friendship to exchange! (Barnes 3.5: 101-118) (emphasis added, except where indicated)

What Pocahontas foretells is the westward expansion of colonial America, a seemingly inevitable expansion mandated, according to the vision, by Pocahontas’s ancestors and which will result in the rightful and peaceful settlement of the United States by “Improvement’s course, *unebbing*.”

vi. "Distress of Conquest" and the Pocahontas Dramas

Each play, regardless of their variations, ends on a similarly optimistic note. I have been arguing, however, that although Pocahontas's intervention bespeaks the rightness of the white civilizing mission, there is still evidence of doubt in that regard that suffuses all of the plays. In each play, the Indian characters speak of the violence they have already suffered at the hands of the English and the continued violence they fear. In Owen's play, Utta, a counselor to Powhatan, expresses the basic feeling of these sentiments muttered by different characters among the disparate plays:

> They promised us
> In spring they would be gone. Meanwhile they begged
> For leave to put up wigwams, to defend them
> Against the cold. That too we granted them.
> In spring, when ice was gone, they wanted land—
> A little land, but just enough to grow
> Herbs for their soup. That, too, we granted them.
> At last, when they appeared to have forgotten
> Their promise of departure, and across
> The great Salt Lake . . .
> . . . we told them they must go.
> They pointed to the big guns around their wigwams
> And told us they would stay. And they have stayed!
> These self-same pale-faced strangers, if we fail

To send them corn . . .

They loose their thunder on our sacred Okee,

Kill braves and squaws, pillage our store-houses,

And act their will, as if the Mighty Spirit

Had given this land to them, and not to us. (Owen 81-82)

These protestations, repeated in each play, are prophetic, as nineteenth-century playwrights and audiences would know too well. In each play, however, they are undermined by the Indians' deceit (represented by the planned ambush), the honor and bravery of the English heroes Smith and Rolfe, and by the love and admiration that motivates Pocahontas to risk her life for them. In other words, playwrights rewrite history to justify the cruelty Utta relates. Neutralizing the distress, however, does not erase it.

There is also a dark aspect of Pocahontas's tale as yet unacknowledged in the Pocahontas dramas; namely, that her decision to affiliate with white culture ultimately amounts to treachery against her own people. The plays characterize her decision to aid the settlers as heroic and as a virtuous decision made in response to Indian villainy. If Smith's account is true, Powhatan planned to betray Smith by inviting the colonists to a meal, convincing them to leave their weapons outside, and then ambushing Smith and his men. Smith relates that Pocahontas learned of this and warned the Englishmen (the second rescue), which event the plays reproduce. From Smith's perspective, these actions indeed appear treacherous, but this attitude disregards the position of Native Americans as espoused by the character Utta in the above paragraph, who felt threatened by colonial invasion. The true treachery in Pocahontas's story is her abduction by Captain Argall, which lasted more than two years. The insistence on morphing her legend so that events force her to choose between the white men she loves and the culture she is apparently

happy to leave behind rewrites history so that the Indians are always the villains, never the colonists. In other words, fictional accounts of the Pocahontas legend serve as a massive national cover up motivated by anxiety regarding the cruelty of expansionist policies.

The male Indian presented an occupying force within America's national boundaries and thus challenged complete American domestic sovereignty. Representations of male Indians rehearsed means by which to eliminate this obstacle. Unlike the black male slave, male Native Americans possessed at least some agency because of their retention of family structures, systems of governments, and pre-contact presence on the land. Indian dramas are careful to emphasize that these factors are not enough to overcome the rightness of white settlement. On the other hand, even as white settlement is posited as inevitable and right, Jones argues that the representations of male Indians "masked white people's fear of Indians as obstacles to the fulfillment of their desire to settle in the New World" (vii). Insisting on inevitability, Jones seems to say, is indicative of a certain degree of doubt. The fear rested in the realization that if Americans were unable to wrest the lands from the Indians, they were not actually destined to do so. Assumptions of their own superiority initiated an environment in which circumstances could prove them wrong; the Natives might actually be the superior population, at least in war, a notion that would upset the entire value relationship in the civilized/savage binary.

One might also attribute the anxiety regarding the presence of Native Americans to guilty knowledge of the cruel realities of conquest as practiced in the United States. This ambivalence is apparent in the lack of a unanimous agreement regarding governmental policies of Native American removal. As many abolitionists argued regarding slavery, some Americans considered official treatment of Natives as being in conflict with Christian values. Andrew Preston, in his book *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, offers the example of Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen.

As Preston relates in his narrative, Frelinghuysen "attacked Indian Removal from the floor of the Senate as a betrayal of America's Christian character and its true manifest destiny" (142). Even writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson protested this inconsistency. According to Preston:

> When he learned of the government's plan to remove the Cherokees, [Emerson] wrote a furious, pleading letter to President Martin Van Buren. "In the name of God, sir, we ask you if this is so?" Emerson charged that such a "dereliction of faith and virtue, such a denial of justice, and such deafness to screams for mercy" were incompatible with the Christian nature of American ethics. (142)

An unconscious awareness of the cruel inequities inherent in Manifest Destiny permeates the plays, suggesting that even those ostensible supporters of the atrocities worried over the means the settlers used to achieve their divinely mandated ends. The rehearsal of Pocahontas's seemingly independent choice to aid white settlement and to ally with it through marriage points to a continuing and ubiquitous anxiety over white and Native American relations underlying the mania of Manifest Destiny.

Conclusion

By the time John Brougham presented his burlesque, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas,* in 1855, any pretense that the Pocahontas legend existed for any other reason than for white culture to negotiate its relationship to conquest had vanished. True to the satirical form of burlesque, Brougham used his play to criticize aggressive expansionism and to comment on Native acculturation. In his version, the Indian settlement is actually a girls' finishing school, Pocahontas is in love with Smith, Rolfe is a blundering Dutch idiot, and Smith and Powhatan

negotiate for his freedom over a game of poker. Pocahontas is represented as a white woman in nearly every way, with only her feathered headdress indicating her savage ancestry (see Figure 2.4). The play is a vehicle for political satire, not national aggrandizement, and uses only the barest bones of the legend to make its jabs. This dilution of the legend for comedic satire points to a general disappearance from the stage of any serious treatment of Native American subjects.

In the fickle manner of vogues, the popularity of Indian dramas faded as popular attention turned toward the growing fervor over abolition. As Native femininity faded from the popular stage, black captive femininity took its place. This transition indicates a shift away from a focus on expansionism toward a seemingly more pressing problem—the crisis of citizenship apparent in the growing violence and distress over the question of an enslaved population in a free republic. As chapter three discusses, the legal and identity politics at the foundation of the slavery debate continued to manifest in the growing struggle, this time fought out across the captive black female body.

Figure 2.4 Georgina Hodson as Pocahontas Hodson appeared in *Po-ca-hon-tas: or, the Gentle Savage* (1855). From the Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

CHAPTER THREE

Antebellum Slavery Melodramas:

"Distressed Citizenship" and the Mixed-Raced Slave Woman

In chapter one, I analyzed the white virgin figure of the Gothic plays. Set in vaguely European locales and an ambiguously distant past, the Gothic plays reflected abstract expectations of femininity that male religious and social leaders deemed necessary to deal successfully with the "crisis" of independence. In other words, assuming that one can understand the present in light of the past, and given that the United States was still such a young nation, the anxieties of the present could only be allayed by idealizing womanhood in a semi-allegorical milieu in which parables proposed the necessity of feminine discipline in order to ensure an "independent" future. In chapter two, history becomes slightly clearer as audiences and playwrights utilized the feminine Native American body as a means by which to fabricate a national past, one that justified the bloody acquisition of land that promised a triumphant national future. This justification, however, was a shadowed one, haunted by the prophetic speeches by Native American characters enumerating the violent cruelties that whites of the 1830s and 1840s perpetrated against Natives. Now, in chapter three, in which I analyze slavery melodramas, the visions of femininity I explore are set firmly in the antebellum present.[56]

[56] As far as I can find, the term "slavery melodramas" is my own. Often historians classify plays such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* under the general heading of melodrama; some, such as Tice L. Miller in his book *Entertaining the Nation*, define plays with abolitionist leanings as reform drama (104). Boucicault's *The Octoroon* utilizes many of the conventions of sensation melodrama and so is often described as belonging to that genre (106). Stanton B. Garner, Jr., in his introduction to *The Escape*, classifies the play as abolitionist literature (111-116). For the sake of simplicity and to emphasize the significant number of plays on slavery themes in the antebellum era, I refer to all plays whose primary subject is slavery and which participate in melodramatic conventions as "slavery melodramas."

Slavery was the most potent and visible of symbolic violations of democratic ideals, serving as a site upon which to investigate other weaknesses or inconsistencies that seemed to threaten the foundations of present American society and thus its future prosperity. Plays about the presence of slavery in a democratic society challenged the utopian vision of America as a democratic paradise, exposing the edict "all men are created equal" to be, in the words of travel writer Frances Trollope, a "phrase of mischievous sophistry" (qtd. in McDougall 24). Writing of Alexis de Tocqueville's analysis of American democracy, historian Walter A. McDougall comments, "Although irony was not in his [Tocqueville's] nature, he suspected democracy in America was a great truth maintained by a delicate balance of fictions" (20). A great many of these "fictions," such as the guarantee of "liberty and justice for all" promised in the Pledge of Allegiance, circulated around the related questions of belonging and citizenship. Desire factors in strongly here—these "delicate[ly] balanced fictions" were themselves motivated and supported by the cluster of promises inculcated in the identity "American citizen," namely personal liberty, financial enfranchisement, legal protection, and, through all of these means, social legibility. The reality that this cluster of promises was most closely associated with white, male, middle-class bodies added to the tenuous nature of these fictions, making them reliant on performances of race and gender that complicated legal strictures on citizenship with bodily appearances and behaviors. The result was a matrix of juridical, visible, and internal classifications for determining true citizenship which emphasized the imperfect nature of American egalitarianism. In the slavery melodramas of the antebellum period, audiences were

I avoid the term "abolition melodramas" because, although abolitionist leanings appear in each play, only Wells Brown's play can be considered to have abolition as its primary end (the other plays can be said to have commercial ambitions as their primary ends, using the sensational aspects of slavery as a means). There are also many plays, not discussed in the present chapter, with distinctly anti-abolitionist leanings but whose subject is still slavery and which adopt the melodramatic mode.

confronted with the unraveling of the "great truth" of American citizenship and the fictions and desires underwriting it.

In this final chapter, I analyze the interstitial femininity of the mixed-race slave woman and her relationship to "distressed citizenship" in slavery melodramas. Paul Gilmore, in a recent article analyzing mixed-race women in the work of William Wells Brown, argues:

> [T]he tragic mulatta figures in antislavery fiction in general and *Clotel* [a novel by Wells Brown] in particular . . . embodied the ideals of the middle-class true womanhood and illustrate the dangers of slavery to the virtue and modesty deemed essential to this idealized femininity. Yet in rendering female slaves true women, such stories erased all but the most minute trace of their blackness. (763)

Gilmore represents a commonplace strain of analysis of the antebellum era, namely that mixed-race black womanhood on the stage or the page signaled a symbolic transformation to whiteness in order to gain social legibility, which in turn encouraged the empathy needed to convert audiences to abolitionist ideals or to bolster their existing abolitionist commitment. While this analysis certainly is germane to representations of mixed-race slave women (especially for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), I argue that this line of thinking tends to oversimplify the complex motivations for representing mixed-race femininity, especially on the stage. In her discussion of early American literature, Toni Morrison observes that "what seemed to be on the 'mind' of the literature of the United States was the self-conscious but highly problematic construction of the American as a new white man" (39). The femininity exemplified in various incarnations of the mixed-raced slave woman can be understood in light of this "problematic construction" and different populations' attempts to contest or normalize such a construction. To this end, I analyze George L. Aiken's adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly* (1852), *The Escape; or,*

Leap for Freedom (1858) by William Wells Brown, and *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana* (1859) by Dion Boucicault. I demonstrate how these plays, as examples of dystopian literature, represent mixed-race slave women in ways that reveal the competing and endlessly complicated notions of "distressed citizenship" circulating in the antebellum era. Supporting my analysis is the work of influential black feminist thinkers such as bell hooks and Hortense Spillers, whose formative work on black femininity brings into harsh relief black women's travails under slavery and the further violence they undergo in aesthetic representation.

According to *Merriam-Webster's*, the term "dystopia" refers to "an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives." I add to this definition a sense of social values being inverted from what the reader understands as the putatively rightful order or a particular understanding of right relations in a society. In the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other slavery melodramas, that future is the present, lending a sense of urgency to each play's *mise-en-scène*. Understanding slavery melodramas as belonging to the genre of dystopian literature emphasizes the degree to which the different plays analyzed here represent mixed-race slave women as emblems of dystopian distress. Although employed in ways particular to each play, the different works utilize this mode of imperiled femininity to both represent and to comment on the atmosphere of what I call "distressed citizenship" perpetuated in the divided terrain of a pre-Emancipation United States.

Part I: The Antebellum Era

i. Citizenship and its Discontents

"A culture of domination demands of all its citizens self-negation."

- *bell hooks*, Black Looks: Race and Representation

In the first chapter of *Walden* (1854), Henry David Thoreau observes that "The incessant anxiety and strain of some is a well-nigh incurable form of disease" (Thoreau). In the American antebellum era of which he writes, Thoreau could easily substitute "most" for "some," as a great many United States residents struggled to find their footing in the rapidly changing world of industrialization, increased urbanization, westward expansion, and mass immigration. Not since the period immediately following the Revolutionary War, when leaders clashed over the form and role of the federal government, had society found the maxim "*e pluribus unum*" so difficult to uphold. There could be no doubt that American society was indeed composed of the "many," but just how this teeming mass of heterogeneity could become "one" *and still remain free* had been in serious doubt at least since the northeastern riots of the 1830s and 1840s.[57] Overall, there seemed to be little "unity" in the United States during this period; instead, an insistent splintering prevailed, initiated by the development of competing political parties following the Jacksonian period and finding its apex in the outbreak of war in 1861.

The Civil War, in the minds of everyday people, was a war about freedom, and thus a war about citizenship.[58] At their core, the abolitionist, temperance, woman's suffrage, and other

[57] The northeast urban areas experienced intense periods of mob violence motivated by racial, economic and class tensions. In 1834, for example, New York underwent "the worst outbreak of violence since the days of the Revolutionary War" (McConachie 144). According to historian Kent James, "In the 1830s and 1840s, tensions over slavery were the cause of many riots in the North; rioters sought to terrorize abolitionists (the burning of Pennsylvania Hall in Philadelphia in 1838, for example) or on the opposite side, prevent Southern slave catchers from taking African Americans back into slavery. Immigration and religion were the causes of other pre-Civil War riots . . . Protestants and Catholics fought in Philadelphia in 1844 over what version of the Bible was to be used in the schools" (685).

[58] Persuasive theories, such as that proposed by Cedric Robinson in his book *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, argue that the Civil War was actually more about the business interests and financial concerns of Northern industrialists than emancipation. However, for everyday citizens, it was a war about freedom—who should have it, who should not, and to what extent the government should be allowed to decide the question.

reform movements were also about citizenship—specifically, about defining and contesting behaviors that limited one's ability to perform fully as an American citizen, whether in the legal sense of juridical participation through voting or the symbolic sense of exhibiting middle-class behaviors and characteristics understood by many to fully embody the American national ethos. Temperance advocates, for example, protested alcoholism because it limited men's ability to fulfill their gendered social role, namely working and providing for the family (this is apparent in the main conflict of *The Drunkard* (1844) by William Henry Smith, one of the era's most famous plays, in which the protagonist's drinking causes his family to suffer horribly) (Bank 143). Similarly, anti-prostitution societies wished to reform the profession's fallen women so that they could participate in their gendered role as true women, exemplifying the inviolable moral center of the family unit that was the very rock and foundation of American society and, by extension, the putative epitome of symbolic citizenship (Bank 151-153). Many of the riots of the 1830s and 1840s that are usually labeled "race riots" or "antiabolition riots" were spawned by male immigrant or immigrant-descended agitators who, uncertain of their citizenship because of their own recent arrival or non-Anglo-Saxon lineage, protested any racial or gender mixing that might weaken their own resemblance to the concept of "citizen" as white, male, working, and voting (Lott 132-139). In terms of legal citizenship, suffragettes, ex-slaves, and free-born black felt excluded from full citizenship because they were not allowed to vote. Essentially, they viewed voting as what enabled individuals to become citizens of democracy and subjects of the law, rather than subsisting merely as objects. In all of these distressed states, it is the performance of citizenship, a collection of behaviors that identifies one as "American" or excludes one from that identity, that forms a common foundation for them all. The rhetoric of each faction challenged the vertical hierarchy of access to freedom, liberty, and rights that were, according to such

dictates as "all men are created equal" and "liberty and justice for all," ostensibly distributed horizontally to all people in the union. Slaves, as those most completely without any rights or liberties, became symbolic capital for all of these movements.

The citizen/slave binary created a symbolic economy in which "citizen" meant access to the complete cluster of promises exemplified by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The internalized sense that all people have a right to those promises, what Castiglia calls Federalized affect, led individuals doggedly to protect rights if they had them or to fight for them if they did not.[59] In the citizen/slave binary (perhaps more than in any other) desire, in the sense I have been using it throughout this project as a cluster of promises, figures most intensely.[60] In the order/disorder binary, order could be achieved by men by having domain over their homes and participating appropriately in commerce, church, and community. Women could strive to overcome their own innate disorder through discipline, maternity, and moral fortitude. As for the civilized/savage binary, access to the "civilized" term of this duality was nearly as easily acquired by many of the same means—Christian participation in the financial and social priorities of the American nation and its projects. Both "order" and "civilization" assumed gendered and racialized dimensions that were also colored by class expectations, meaning they had built-in mechanisms of exclusion that do not fully come to light until one begins to pursue the "A" term of the citizen/slave binary.[61] One could impose order on one's self if one was disordered; one could also practice Christianity, espouse democratic

[59] See chapter one of Castiglia's *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States* (2008).
[60] This refers to Lauren Berlant's articulation of desire in her article "Cruel Optimism." See page 26 of my introduction for more on how I use this concept in this project.
[61] I refer to the "A/Not A" form of binary relationships that I argue organized hegemonic nineteenth-century American thought. Read in this form, the "citizen/slave" binary is understood as "citizen/not-citizen." The overriding binary patterned in this way was "American/not American," in which "American" is the ultimate "A" term. Other "A" terms comprise constituent terms in the "American" term. See my Introduction for a complete discussion.

truisms, and participate in socially acceptable causes. One could not, however, (at least not in this era) change one's gender, one's external racial characteristics, one's place of birth, or one's parentage. In the nineteenth century, one could not always transcend one's economic or social class, or direct the moral or social exigencies that accompany it. Laws and custom dictated exclusion from full citizenship (whether legal or symbolic) based on one's possession or lack of these biological, social, and economical characteristics. If one was not a citizen, then one was, rhetorically at least, at the level of slave. While it is clear to us now that the two conditions are not actually equivalent, in the sentimental economy of the antebellum era, outrage at one's disenfranchisement could be expressed hyperbolically by equating this reduced condition to the most unfairly reduced condition of the chattel slave (or, conversely, by using the rightness of keeping the slaves in their abject position as a way to feel more secure in one's citizenship).

Shadowing the difficulties caused by the competing needs and perspectives presented by such a highly heterogeneous population was the conflict between definitions of "freedom," "liberty," and "citizenship" at work in the term "American." Castiglia and Priscilla Wald both emphasize the tendency of legal and social practices to place non-white, non-men in the "not American" term of the American/not American binary, even if only by implication. According to Castiglia:

> the guides to early national character defined a series of traits and activities—anger, boisterousness, gossip, sensuality, intemperate desire—as illiberal, the unruly interiority not just of individual subjects who were the targets of antebellum reform, but of categories of identity that were *collectively* disenfranchised on the basis of their illiberal characters: women, African and

> Native Americans, the poor, the insane, prostitutes, drunkards, immigrants, bachelors and spinsters, children. (Castiglia 27)

What Castiglia outlines here is a Foucauldian hierarchical ordering of bodies based on their (in)ability to correctly participate as citizens. Such ability was determined in terms of social and physical behaviors. We have already seen this ideology at work in the discourse of hysteria that began regulating women's behavior in the early Republic and which, in the antebellum era, had influenced the raising of white female purity to a near-religion.[62]

The "national character" that Castiglia describes above as being defined negatively by those exhibiting excluded behaviors was supported, importantly, by legal structures. Priscilla Wald, in her book *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form*, argues unflinchingly that "Debates on the status of indigenes and descendants of Africans could not avoid addressing whom the founders had intended to include in 'We the People,' what entity they had *legislated into existence* with the Constitution, and the very role of that Constitution in the ongoing governance of the United States" (Wald 15) (emphasis added). What Wald points to here is that in legislating limitations to full civic involvement on the basis of race and gender, the Constitution and other legal structures of the United States articulated the criteria of personhood. If personhood can be bestowed by the law, Wald argues, then the law can also revoke it: "The bestowal of citizenship and protection of liberties that were recognized tasks of law seemed to collapse into a *conferral* of personhood from which even a white native-born American man might well worry that he may one day be excluded as other groups were already excluded" (Wald 19) (original emphasis). Wald further asserts that this "lesson was available, if only intuitively, to anyone witnessing Cherokee Removal, African enslavement, or married (white)

[62] See, for example, Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions*; Amy E. Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity"; Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother*.

women's property laws" (Wald 39). Ostensibly, any (non-Native American) person born outside the bonds of slavery in the United States could be a citizen. Since Congress initiated the first act on March 26, 1790, White immigrants could gain citizenship by successfully completing the naturalization process (Bolger).[63] Problematically, however, laws and social practice excluded native-born and naturalized citizens from full social and legal participation or protection, as evident in gendered and racialized suffrage laws and legislation such as the Fugitive Slave Act and the Dred Scott decision (discussed at length in Part II of this chapter).

Parallel to and in tension with the legal structures/strictures of citizenship was what I have referred to above as symbolic citizenship, by which I mean the ideal repertoire of bodily appearance, behaviors, and beliefs exhibited by those who were or wanted to be American. In this sense civic belonging is performative rather than strictly legislative. Important to the present chapter is the increasing degree to which this mode of symbolic belonging had to do with racial distinctions, specifically with performing whiteness (or, relatedly, performing or representing blackness as a means to further define or demonstrate one's belonging to the category of whiteness).[64] This is evident in the appropriation by white working-class men of the term "freeman." According to David Roediger in his book *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, "Much popular energy was in fact expended to make the literal legal title of *freeman* absolutely congruent with *white* adult maleness" (Roediger 58). In the binary-driven American culture, this required formulating "freeman" as incompatible with blackness. Roediger notes that "Webster's 1829 dictionary gave as its first definition of *freeman*

[63] The naturalization process was not available to people of African descent until 1870 (Bolger).
[64] Cedric Robinson notes in *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, for example, that one reason Irish immigrants and Irish descendants contributed so heavily to the formation of blackface minstrelsy was in an effort to distinguish themselves from blackness generally, a category to which Irish and other Caucasian foreigners were socially relegated (133).

'one who enjoys liberty . . . one not a slave or a vassal,' and as its second 'one who enjoys or is entitled to a franchise'" (Roediger 56). In white working-men's effort to define "free" as masculine and unenslaved, "Blackness . . . almost perfectly predicted lack of the attributes of a freeman" (56). Those white men seeking the title *freemen* (and the civic and economic privileges associated with it) worked to actively disempower free black men, both legally through the repeal or amendment of laws allowing free black men to vote and extra-legally through violence. As Roediger remarks:

> That Blacks were largely noncitizens will surprise few, but it is important to emphasize the extent to which they were seen as *anticitizens*, as 'enemies rather than members of the social compact.' As such they were driven from Independence Day parades as 'defilers' of the body politic and driven from their homes by the Sons of Liberty and Minute Men. The more powerless they became, the greater their supposed potential to be used by the rich to make freemen unfree. Thus, it was necessary to watch for the smallest signs of power among Blacks, and, since Blacks were defenseless, it was easy to act on perceived threats. (57)

This behavior exhibits a belief in ethnic whiteness as having cultural and abstract or symbolic significance; it not only marks belonging but typifies it as well as a set of normative traits that are also prerequisites to that belonging.

Complicating this scenario is the fact that the white working class man's claim to inclusion by virtue of that same white masculinity was challenged by other definitions of whiteness at work or under construction in the antebellum era. The Reform movement, for example, was founded by both white and black middle-class activists to combat what were seen

as degrading behaviors that would impede the national project. Many of these deleterious behaviors such as drinking, patronizing prostitutes, and supporting the continued practice of slavery were practiced (and prized) by white working class men, especially those of immigrant descent (McDougall 27). The reformers had their own notion of the proper performance of whiteness, tied to patriarchal authority, domestic life, education, economic success, and asceticism. They were dedicated to "principles of self-control, personal abstention, and collective efficiency" (Jones, Jr. 17). As the antebellum era progressed, the asceticism associated with virtuous white behavior expanded to include complete temperance and even avoiding spicy foods. Kyla Tompkins discusses this in her book *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth century:* "Just as drink and masturbation decayed the body and the mind, so too did a diet embracing the foreign commodities made available by the expanded sphere of consumerism have a subversive and perverting effect on the antebellum American body" (70). As an extension of this logic, what Tompkins calls the "dietetic movement" promoted itself by "tapping into the political energy of republicanism as a discourse of self-improvement and civic belonging" (Tompkins 71) In short, Reformers perceived a moral dissipation of American society encouraged by indulgence and consumption that was itself evidence of "distressed citizenship"; the societies and campaigns they organized to combat this dissipation aimed at creating a citizenry more in line with their version of symbolic citizenship, namely middle-class values of correct bodily deportment.

Finally, symbolic citizenship as a performance of particular modes of white national identity depended to a hugely significant degree on idealized notions of white femininity as the center of the (middle-class) domestic unit, the beginnings of which I analyze in chapter one. The rhetorical connection between national survival and white female purity as a means to reproduce

national ideology reached an almost evangelical level of commitment in the antebellum era (Ryan 12). The mother and the family replaced the virgin as the focus of domestic literature, partially in response to the challenges that modern life posed to familial ties. As Mary P. Ryan, in her book *Empire of the Mother*, notes, "The middle class was a very unstable and precarious social formation during the antebellum era, when men and women scrambled to find secure positions in a shifting occupational structure" (15). Part of this "scrambling" was traveling away from one's childhood home to work in factories or to settle in lands out west. Ryan describes the shuffling that American demographics underwent in the antebellum era:

> In Boston, for example, the rate of geographical mobility was such that half the population disappeared and was replaced within eighteen months. Meanwhile, small eastern towns and farmlands were depleted of their children as the young left for urban areas and westward frontiers. On the western prairies and in 'instant cities' across the continent, new social networks were hastily constructed by congregations of relative strangers. Even these new settlements exhibited the pervasive penchant for movement as nearly half of their new residents pulled up stakes again within ten years. (15)

The movement Ryan describes resulted often in feelings of dislocation, as American's kinship ties and familiar systems of beliefs were left behind at the family home. This may explain the "harnessing of what Charles Hamm calls 'the most popular emotion of the day,' nostalgia," at the center of which was the intertwined images of the home and the mother (Meer 57). The nostalgic longing for home is exemplified in such famous songs of the era as John Howard Payne's "Home Sweet Home," the most popular song of the antebellum period (Grimsted 229).

Nostalgia for home, Ryan argues, accounts, at least partially, for the enormous popularity of domestic novels in this period. She notes, "By 1850, domestic literature had transcended local boundaries and conquered a national market" (11). The mother, as the iconic center of the home, became the reigning icon of female symbolic citizenship. Women, as the primary writers of domestic literature, "replaced men as the primary subject matter, largest reading audience, and the best-selling authors" (Ryan 16). The sky-rocketing cultural capital of domestic womanhood suggests a certain degree of power and influence that only women, as wives and mothers, could possess. The hugely popular genre of domestic literature, however, contained undercurrents that suggest distress regarding the stability of the domestic center. As Ryan explains, "The convoluted plots of popular novels, which were forever skirting domestic disaster and courting private terror, suggests some of the most grating contradictions in antebellum family life," with the need to dislocate from family in order to pursue opportunities being one of those contradictions. Amy Kaplan also recognizes the anxious undertones informing the national commitment to domesticity. She says: "If writers about domesticity encouraged the extension of the female influence outward to domesticate the foreign, their writings also evoked anxiety about the opposing trajectory that brings foreignness into the home" (191). This simultaneous investment in the stability of domesticity and anxiety regarding its ability to endure dislocation indicates a crisis of domesticity that was itself a mark of "distressed citizenship," as the home emerged as a potent symbol of national belonging in the antebellum era.

The home and the ideal women at its center opened up other avenues for "distressed citizenship." Notwithstanding popular investment in the superiority of domesticity, real women remained excluded from participating in full legal citizenship. No women were allowed to vote, and marriage laws in many states effectively reduced women to possessions owned by their

husbands. Despite Ryan's claim that "the antebellum women's movement enrolled only a tiny minority of the female population," I argue that such events as the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 suggest a significant dissatisfaction with women's partial symbolic citizenship. This can be seen in such resolutions made at the Convention as "That all laws which prevent woman from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to the great precept of nature, and there of no force or authority" ("Report"). The impetus behind Seneca Falls and succeeding events indicate a growing dissatisfaction on the part of women regarding the gap between their ostensibly superior moral position and their inferior civic position. Ideologies of domesticity, then, spawned multiple modes of "distressed citizenship" as it simultaneously exposed the vulnerability of the symbolic homes for a mobile population and, for some women, highlighted the unbearable inequalities inherent in the modes of citizenship available to men and women. After all, "if woman was so very little less than the angels, she should surely take a more active part in running the world, especially since men were making such a hash of things" (Welter, "Cult" 327).

While women, at the very least, enjoyed significant symbolic citizenship, free black people struggled to achieve even that modicum of civic validity. Douglas A. Jones, Jr., in his recent book *The Captive Stage*, discusses the extent to which the citizenship of free black people was in question from the United States' earliest days:

> The role of slaves and free people of color in the emergent polity surfaced as a markedly fraught question. On the one hand, dominant civic discourses rendered whiteness the precondition of citizenship. On the other, the prevalence of the rhetoric of egalitarianism threatened the permanence of such raced-based civil

> circumscriptions. That many slaves and free people of color demanded full citizenship in return made questions of civil inclusion all the more pressing. (Jones, Jr. 21)

The question of inclusion remained unanswered until after the Civil War, nearly one hundred years after the Revolutionary War in which so many black Americans, slave and free, fought for independence. The lack of resolution did not mean, however, that black people stopped pressing the issue. Jones, Jr. emphasizes black American's commitment to participating in civic ceremonies, such as parades and other patriotic celebrations (12). Even when many Northern states repealed black suffrage laws, black Americans found other ways to exercise their civic voice. Namely, they began holding political meetings, first at the national level in the late 1820s, and then at the state level in the late 1830s (10). Jones, Jr. notes that "Throughout that history, meetings functioned as training grounds for local, state, national black leaders, but starting in the early 1840s they took a decidedly radical turn" due to the "worsening forms of racial inequality . . . and the rise of mob violence against black people and their property . . ." (Jones, Jr. 11). Part of this militancy was a response to the racism inherent in the abolition movement, many of whose members rejected slavery on moral grounds yet supported excluding black Americans from full citizenship on the grounds of black racial inferiority (see Jones Jr., chapter four). Black Americans, both slave and free, represent the height of "distressed citizenship" in the antebellum era. Through their own efforts, such as holding conventions, publishing narratives of their experiences, speaking on abolition circuits, and otherwise speaking out against racist exclusion, black people raised the profile of the black struggle to attain citizenship and helped make it a national issue. As I demonstrate below, however, white citizens harboring their own experience

of "distressed citizenship" often coopted the black person as symbol of incomplete freedom, appropriating the cultural capital of enslaved blackness for their own rhetorical ends.

ii. Distressed Dramaturgies: Theatre in the Antebellum Era

Although theatre had been a staple of American cultural experience since the 1790s, antebellum theatre saturated the urban cultural landscape to a greater extent than ever before in the nation's history. A major reason for this was what Jones Jr. calls "the proliferation of highly delimited performance spaces and entertainments . . ." (136). In other words, specific audiences demanded specific types of performances, which required specific theatres in which to house them. The Bowery Theatre, for example, catered to working class audiences who preferred sensation melodrama, minstrel shows, and plays featuring blue collar characters like Mose the fireman, in which they could see themselves reflected (McConachie 95).[65] Reformers, whose middle-class ideals of decorum and domesticity I discuss above as comprising the height of symbolic citizenship, created an unlikely, but sizeable, new audience in the antebellum era. As Jones, Jr. explains, "Although social reformers were strongly anti-theatrical, by the early 1840s they could no longer ignore the considerable hold the stage maintained on the nation's collective imagination. Thus, they built their own theatres and developed their own performance ethic with which to promote their cultural and social ideals" (17). The "performance ethic" Jones, Jr. alludes to insisted on plays promoting only morally uplifting messages in line with middle-class ethos. This insistence on propriety created a space where white women could attend the theatre without endangering their reputations, enlarging potential audiences as never before. Further,

[65] See Also Eric Lott, *Love and Theft* for a thorough analysis of antebellum working-class men's audiences.

patronizing these theatres marked one as belonging to the middle-class, a desire many Americans possessed. Canny entrepreneurs such as P. T. Barnum recognized and rushed to accommodate these burgeoning audiences (McConachie 161-164).

Despite the division of theatres and their audiences into highbrow, lowbrow, and middlebrow, some genres transcended these boundaries. Significantly, the two genres to do so most frequently were also the two forms most dependent on representations of blackness, namely blackface minstrelsy and slavery melodramas. Reviews of such plays as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Octoroon* suggest that these plays attracted audiences of all classes regardless of the venue presenting them. Theatre historian Sarah Meer, in her book *Uncle Tom Mania*, notes that "The spectators at the *Tom* plays . . . experienced a temporary sense of community, and reviewers were struck by the plays' power to elicit sympathy across social divides" (107). She cites a review by the abolitionist Parker Pillsbury, in which he "noted with delight that a Boston production drew wealthy patrons, 'one of the largest and best looking audiences I ever saw in any theater'" (108). Meer cites several other reviews which devote commentary to the mixed audience demographics. One reason for this heterogeneity in an otherwise regimented theatre culture, I argue, was the centrality of the slavery debate to this era. Slavery melodramas presented circumstances of pressing importance to many Americans (although for competing reasons). The sense of dystopia I argue suffuses the form created an atmosphere in which audience's anxieties regarding freedom and citizenship could find expression. David Grimsted observes that although many melodramas located sin in personal rather than social failing, "by the 1850s some, most notably *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, tentatively gave a social rather than personal explanation for evil." This development showed "an increasing willingness to see man's character not as a moral abstraction but as a complex product of a particular personal and social

environment" (222). The slavery melodramas under analysis in the remainder of this chapter all emphasize the systemic degeneration of society allowed by the legal protection of slavery. The role mixed-race slave women perform in communicating each author's interpretation of this dystopia comprises the primary focus of my analyses.

Part II: Dystopia and/as Slavery Melodrama

"The theatrical body emerging in the years leading up to the Civil War was no doubt a corporeal manifestation of a turbulent era."

- *Daphne Brooks*, Bodies in Dissent

While slavery melodramas were not the first or only melodramas to feature recognizable people and places from the American national landscape, as we have seen with the Pocahontas plays, they were the plays that embodied the most tumultuous and contradictory desires of the chaotic antebellum era. Their significance lies partially in the term "antebellum" itself, referring to the era directly preceding and influencing the Civil War. It is not, after all, commonly referred to as the "pre-temperance era," the "proto-women's suffrage era," or even the "era of reform," even though these were all aspects of the confused and passionate activism that infuses the slavery melodramas. Instead, all of these different causes are subsumed into the term "antebellum," implying that the events of this era contributed to the preparation for a war.

In many ways, slavery melodrama was a focal point for the controversy over citizenship that eventually resulted in the war of emancipation. An intrinsic feature of slavery melodramas that garners attention is the centrality and repetition of the figure of the mixed-race slave woman. As in the Gothic plays and the Pocahontas dramas, moments of imperiled femininity provide space for the expression (and, for some, temporary relief) of distress. In the case of the mixed-race slave woman, the distress in question is "distressed citizenship." Even more than the black

male slaves populating minstrelsy and melodrama at this time, black female characters, especially those of mixed race, were manipulated in plays to serve the multitude of competing voices attempting to parse out the infuriating conundrum of the "land of the free" in which many were in some way enchained.

My analyses of slavery melodramas in this chapter center on how considering these plays as dystopian literature influences representations of the mixed-race slave women that populate them. While the dystopian society at the center of each play functions differently in each play's narrative, there are particular consistencies across the plays that support their labeling as dystopian. Prevalent across all three plays, for example, is the representation of characters who fall short of ideal performances of gender. This is most obvious in the supporting white female characters in the plays. As I discuss in chapter one, the interstitial femininity of the white virgins in the Gothic plays reflected a nascent attempt to define the mode of femininity most likely to reproduce ideal citizens and thereby create order out of an ostensibly disordered population. By the 1850s, this belief in the woman as the repository of national moral health was raised to the level of a civic religion (or cult, as Barbara Welter and others would have it). Reverend John Todd, a hugely influential moralist, wrote in his *The Daughter at School* (1853), "We [men] wish your manners to be polished, your conversation pure and instructive, your countenance lighted up with intelligence, and your mind bright and away; but we desire more. We want the heart trained to commune with God, and the soul to rise up into his light and plume her wings for the flight of eternal ages" (qtd. In Barker-Benfield, *Horrors* 201). Plays such as *The Drunkard*, where the wife suffers patiently and piously while her husband struggles against the demon of alcohol, epitomize the angel-wife and the example she is expected to set for her children and the nation.

Such characterizations of perceptibly placid piety and general feminine equanimity were supported by both male- and female-authored publications, such as Catherine Beecher's remarks in her *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1846): "the nation, as well as the individual, which most excels in the external, as well as the internal, will be most respected and beloved" (5).[66] There is a distinct lack of this form of ideal womanhood in the slavery melodramas. Instead, one encounters white women out of step with the domestic sphere, either in their disregard for its exacting standards or their nonparticipation in the reproductive economy (i.e. spinsters and widows). An example of the former, a mother whose behavior is incompatible with ideal performances of motherhood, is Marie St. Clare in Aiken's Uncle Tom's Cabin. Rather than emulating the polite pleasantness and efficient industry of the domestic helpmeet as described by such work as Catherine Beecher's *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1846), Marie is cynical and physically weak, complaining that her daughter's greeting embrace gives her a headache (Aiken 387). She is contrary on almost every point, refusing to say anything complimentary about Tom and speaking disparagingly of the daguerreotype of St. Clare and Eva. Adopting a dissatisfied air, she sneers, "What made you sit in such an awkward position?" (388). The implied reason for this languid and recalcitrant disposition is the overabundance of labor on the plantation; Marie has no reason to stir, with so much help at hand. The practice of slavery, in Marie, breeds indolence and languor rather than a bustling domestic efficiency. Marie resembles Mrs. Flint from Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Jacobs notes, "Mrs. Flint, like many southern women, was totally deficient in energy. She had not strength to superintend her household affairs; but her nerves were so strong, that she could sit in her easy chair and see a woman whipped till the blood trickled from every stroke of the lash" (Jacobs 758).

[66] It is significant to note that, according to the introduction of Beecher's text, her manual was a textbook used widely in girls' schools across the United States (ii).

As the rhetoric enshrining women at the center of the home intensified, so did discourse defining their binary opposite, the male sphere. Although the rhetoric of domesticity argued that a man's happiness at home was dependent on his wife, men considered themselves the dominant influence. Barker-Benfield argues this point, noting "Man's will controlled woman's will, which disciplined her mind to discipline her body" (*Horrors* 200). "True womanhood," then, is itself a masculine and patriarchal concept, catalyzed by the gradual separation of spheres first instituted following the Revolutionary War. Men, according to this logic, thus have just as much to do with the home as women; indeed, as *The Drunkard* exemplifies, his behavior in the public sphere often directly impacts the quality of life in the private, or woman's, sphere. Dystopian femininity, although represented by female bodies, is also, by extension, aggravated by dystopian masculinity. As I argue throughout this project, masculine malfeasance precipitates crises that motivate imperiled feminine agents to intervene in order to return the scenario to the status quo. In some plays the malfeasance is identifiable in a single villain, such as the Gothic plays; in others malfeasance is found in socially-acceptable practices of deception and conquest that are then justified by claiming the innate malfeasance of indigenous masculinity, as seen in the Pocahontas plays. In the slavery melodramas, masculine malfeasance cannot be tracked through a single eponymous villain, nor is it a buried undercurrent that only analysis imbued with hindsight can productively exhume; rather, masculine malfeasance in these plays is the law itself, the (male-authored) network of juridical relations enabled by legalized slavery, that degenerates the soberly controlled and economically productive ideal of paternalistic masculinity into a dystopian masculinity corrupted by the legal allowance of the accumulation of human capital.

In the nineteenth century, a cornerstone of ideal masculine performance was the controlled ejaculation, or spending, of sperm. Semen, understood to be an important source of

man's vital energy, was something to be conserved. The competitive American economy, in which masculine success in business was the highest good, required a great deal of stamina. Careless "spending" of sperm in masturbation, extra-marital sex, or excessive marital sex would weaken a man, depleting him of precious fluids necessary for his, and, by extensions, his family's financial survival. Barker-Benfield notes that "Men believed their expenditure of sperm had to be governed according to an economic principle," which principle Barker-Benfield refers to as the "spermatic economy" (*Horrors* 181). Revivalist and other evangelical, Calvinist-descended moral leaders, such as Henry Ward Beecher (Harriett Beecher-Stowe's brother), exhausted a considerable amount of their own energy condemning masturbation and other unessential seminal expenditure. Barker-Benfield describes the view of a writer he calls "W": "His second article, about the effects of masturbation on the mind, described how the waste of sperm 'prostrated' *all* of the 'energies of the system.' The 'victim of masturbation passes from one degree of imbecility to another, till all the powers of the systems, mental, physical *and moral*, are blotted out forever'" (180) (emphasis added).

In the slavery melodramas, the spermatic economy is in dire peril and this reality contributes to the atmosphere of dystopia. Significantly, *Merriam-Webster's Medical Desk Dictionary* defines "dystopia" as the "malposition of an anatomical part." American slavery encouraged spermatic displacement, upsetting the balance of American society. Exemplified most often by the figure of the mixed-race slave woman, the excessive and promiscuous spending of sperm by slave owners to violently impregnate slave women and thus produce more slaves of ever-lightening skin tone represents an epidemic of masculine disorder. Joseph Roach's assertion that "violence is a performance of waste" (41) takes on unique overtones in the question of systematic slave rape in a society where so many valued the preservation of sperm as

a way to preserve the masculine order in society. bell hooks observes, acknowledging Angela Davis's origination of the argument, "the rape of female slaves was not, as other scholars have suggested, a case of white men satisfying their sexual lust, but was in fact an institutionalized method of terrorism which had as its goal the demoralization and dehumanization of black women" (27). As the plays illustrate, the sexual economy of slavery, motivated and exemplified by the high price of light-skinned slaves, results in constellation of morally degenerate men. The mixed-race slave woman is the dystopian remainder of such hazardous spending.

The final dystopian similarity these three plays share are their unhappy or uncertain endings. Theatre historian Sarah Meer asserts that a happy ending was standard fare for most melodramas: "in the final scenes wickedness was always thwarted, the villain was foiled, and goodness received its reward" (109). This was the case even for melodramas where very little happiness occurred outside of the ending, such as Dion Boucicault's *The Poor of New York* in which a family is constantly plagued by the specter of poverty until the weight is alleviated by miraculous events that are both reversal and resolution in one. As Grimsted reminds us, "To suggest that any forgiveness for [falling prey to seduction] was possible was 'obscene and impious morality'" (229). In the case of slavery melodramas, there are elements of positive resolution (this is especially the case for *The Escape*), yet the happiness derived from these elements is finite; the overall system that exacerbates the plays' crises is unchanged, denying the possibility of a happy ending. In a traditional melodrama where there is a single recognizable villain, there is also a hero whose goodness and righteousness will foil evil. Where evil is systemic rather than a personal failing, however, there can be no such hero, despite the presence of heroics in each play. As a genre, the slavery melodramas extend dystopian suffering through to the very end, denying even the comfort of formulaic consistency to its spectators.

i. Conservative Dystopia: Uncle Tom's Cabin *by George L. Aiken*

One of America's most puzzling legacies is the extreme, if not fanatical, popularity of stage and screen adaptations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's unqualified literary hit, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Although classified in the genre of the sentimental novel, I argue that Stowe's novel uses this sentimental landscape to interrogate the dystopian nature of the era. As dystopian literature goes, the novel is much more firmly situated in this genre than are its performed adaptations. One of the most popular stage versions, developed by George L. Aiken in 1852, is perhaps closest to the novel in this regard, although, as compared to the *The Escape* or *The Octoroon*, Aiken's play can be considered conservatively dystopian.[67] Attempts to distract from the implicit critique of slavery and its degenerative effects on society with comedic white stock characters, blackface clowns, and sentimentality can only ever be stop-gap measures, as the deep contradictions perpetuated by slavery in a democracy assert themselves time and again. The serialization of Stowe's novel appeared in 1851, coinciding to an important degree with the political and social uproar caused by the inclusion of the Fugitive Slave Act (hereafter FSA) in the Compromise of 1850. A more severe version of its 1793 predecessor, the FSA of 1850 allowed slaveholders or their representatives to pursue runaway slaves and return them to their owners. The law held that slaves accused of being runaways had no right to a trial proving the

[67] It is fascinating to note that adaptations of Stowe's novel can be read as dystopian whether espousing a pro- or anti- slavery position. Each position illustrates the degradation of society by the position argued against in each instance. Sarah Meer notes that many minstrel versions, for example, were proslavery, and played on an antifugitive theme. What she calls the "trope of the disappointed fugitive" proliferates in these plays. She gives the example of an 1860 production at the Bowery: "Uncle Tom, dispatched to rescue Daisy [an abducted slave], is 'disgusted by the climate.' He encounters those blackface political bogeys, a black dandy and a (black) 'female . . . bloomer,' intended to signify an abhorrent Northern liberalism in matters of race and gender that has allowed both women and black men to become uppity. . . . The social, political, and climatic inferiority of the free states is underlined by the demonstration of 'Uncle Tom's delight in getting back to de Bressed Old Souf'" (Meer 65). Where, as I argue, the abolition melodramas represent a dystopia enabled by legal structure, the proslavery dystopia is enabled by social agents opposing those laws, "misperforming" American.

slaveholder's claim on them, resulting in the wrongful abduction and enslavement of free black people. Those caught assisting a runaway slave or impeding their remittance were fined $1,000, a sum twice the $500 amount stipulated by the 1793 version of the law ("Fugitive"). As I read it, the FSA posed difficult questions related to citizenship. It assumed, first, that any obviously black person (namely, with black or not-white skin) was also a fugitive slave, creating an economy within which black citizenship was almost an oxymoron, especially as the black citizens' right to challenge slaveholders' claims was disallowed by the law. The assumed equation of blackness with fugitivity also preempted the "innocent until proven guilty" premise that ostensibly protected citizens by placing the burden of proof on the state. The law placed white citizenship in peril as well, as the law's punishment for aiding accused runaways made anyone who helped them anti-citizens in the sense of actively disregarding federal law. Finally, it stripped state citizenship of its significance, as, in an effort to circumvent states disregarding the law, federal commissioners handled cases of runaway slaves, not state officials. Black and white antislavery factions reacted with vehemence, redoubling their efforts to create networks for runaway slaves and actively interfering with slave arrests, sometimes violently. In the end the law was so adamantly opposed that it became largely unenforceable, resulting in approximately 330 arrests in the ten years between its enactment in 1850 and its repeal in 1860 ("Fugitive").

Despite the Fugitive Slave Act's ultimate lack of legal efficacy, it motivated a culture of both symbolic and actual resistance for which the figure of the runaway slave became an emotionally potent icon. Historian and critic Amy E. Hughes identifies this phenomenon as central to Stowe's novel (and its many adaptations). Referring to George and Eliza, the (light-skinned) runaway slave heroes of the story, Hughes notes:

> The tribulations that Eliza and George endure underscore the absolute injustice of the law; and the white characters in the story who aid the absconders are portrayed as answering to a higher, Christian law. These cultural reverberations of the Compromise . . . reveal that producers and audiences championed the figure of the hotly pursued runaway" (Hughes 87).[68]

The FSA exemplified the conflict between personal identity and legal circumscriptions on notions of valid symbolic citizenship. These struggles form the heart of Aiken's adaptation of Stowe's story as well, maintaining the focus of the slavery question on how it impacts mostly white citizens. In other words, the overall message is not so much about racial equality as living in right relation to Christian teachings.

That Aiken's adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* represents American society as dystopian is apparent in Act two Scene one, which takes place on the Southern plantation belonging to the character St. Clare. The scene represents the dystopian nature of the present society in that the society's values contrast with those of Eva, the symbol of moral purity in the play:

> St. Clare: Which do you like the best—to live as they do at your uncle's, up in Vermont, or to have a house full of servants, as we do?
>
> Eva: Oh! of course our way is the pleasantest.
>
> St. Clare: [*Patting her head*] Why so?
>
> Eva: Because it makes so many more round you to love, you know.
>
> Ophelia [Eva's Aunt]: Now, that's just like Eva—just one of her odd speeches.
>
> Eva: Is it an odd speech papa?

[68] As Andrew Preston observes in *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, not all Christians were abolitionists (135-153).

St. Clare: Rather, as this world goes, Pussy. (Aiken 389-390)

The extent to which Eva's point of view is at odds with her society is exemplified by her death later in the play, suggesting that she was simply too good to remain in this depraved world. Following this exchange, Ophelia scoffs at Eva's obvious affection for Uncle Tom. St. Clare scoffs in turn at her intolerance, arguing, "You would think no harm in a child's caressing a large dog, even if he was black; but a creature that can think, reason and feel, and is immortal, you shudder at" (390). St. Clare criticizes Ophelia's prejudice, calling her to account for not living up to her own religious pretensions: ". . . custom with us does what Christianity ought to do; obliterates the feeling of personal prejudice. . . . You would not have them abused, but you don't want to have anything to do with them yourselves. Isn't that it?" (390). In a country where Christianity was a badge of true citizenship (read, national belonging), St. Clare's speech identifies racism as contradictory to American democracy.[69] The world of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a world where innocent love cannot endure in the face of legalized human suffering, and religious teachings are mouthed by words but undermined by hate.

That the overall world of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is dystopian, rather than featuring merely dystopian elements, is important to our understanding of the mixed-race slave women that appear with alarming regularity throughout the play. These women do not represent anomalies in an otherwise perfect social fabric, but are rather an important part of the repeating pattern of social degeneration. Each of the mixed-race slave women in this story is brought into existence and forced into action by the behavior allowed to men under slave law and the legal protection of slavery as an economic practice. Operating on principles contrary to the spermatic economy, the

[69] At the same time, St. Clare elides the racism inherent in his participation in slavery in the first place; for St. Clare, his paternalistic attitude and ostensible affection for "his" slaves erases any seeming contradiction, at least until Eva indirectly points out his own hypocrisy in her death scene.

slave trade rewarded masters who spent sperm to produce offspring with their slaves by offering high prices for these slaves. The cost of these financial rewards, however, is the depletion of moral fortitude for white men and women and the increased suffering of the enslaved in terms of both the rape of slave women and the disruption of their kinship systems at the whim of their owners. While slave rape is merely hinted at in Aiken's play, the ubiquity of mixed-race women (whose sex appeal is regularly commented upon by white men in the play) is an obvious manifestation of this recurring theme.

The most popular and recognizable of these women is Eliza, the light-skinned house slave of George Shelby (referred to hereafter as Shelby to avoid confusion with Eliza's husband George Harris). The popularity of her image on ephemera such as sheet music illustrations and souvenir dishes attests to the extent to which Eliza's situation resonated with audiences. These images always depict the same scene—Eliza in the act of crossing the Ohio River on broken ice floes as male slave-catchers watch helplessly (see Figure 3.1). Much of the reason for her high profile lies in her identity as a mother risking her life to protect her son from the evils of legalized slavery. According to Lauren Berlant:

> Uncle Tom's Cabin is a much adapted text, one whose moments of comedy and pathos are differently foregrounded in its many recurrences. But the place of 'Poor Eliza' in this ongoing story is striking: almost every adaptation of the novel involves an elaborate dramatic staging of the scene where she crosses the Ohio River riding rafts of ice. This event takes less than two pages in the text. Yet it is a powerful scene, electrified by the awesome power of the mother to harness her own sublimity to the sublimity of nature, thus transforming herself into a species of superperson. (Berlant, "Poor" 644)

Eliza's is an act of what Meer calls "outraged maternity," (Meer 128) the ferocity of which leads her to take drastic action in order to protect her family from the legal exigencies that would tear it apart. Acting on her principles causes Eliza herself to become a fugitive of that very same law. According to Hughes, "Escape constitutes a desperate seizure of subjectivity: the slave 'steals' himself from the master, realizing and declaring agency through criminality" (Hughes 88). The label "criminal" seems an inaccurate one for the woman who asserts ". . . I always thought that I must obey my master and mistress, or I couldn't be a Christian" (Aiken 376). The dystopian world in which Eliza lives causes her to betray her master's trust and actively defy the law.

Eliza appears in the opening scene of the play, along with her husband George. George appears extremely agitated, driven to desperation by news that he is to be sold to another plantation by his cruel master. Eliza tries to calm him by telling him to put his faith in God and all will be well. Eliza's tone changes in Scene two, however, when she learns that her young son, barely a toddler, is to be sold as a way to alleviate Shelby's enormous debts. Shelby's decision to sell Eliza's son, a decision that threatens to further disrupt her kinship system already unraveling in the wake of George's decision to escape, is enabled by the slave system. If selling a human being to pay debts was not a choice, Eliza's rights to her son would not be in question. Here is a strong example of the moral toll that slavery demands of society, making even seemingly kind men out to be villains.

Upon learning Shelby's plan to sell her son, Eliza makes the incredibly daring decision to escape with him. This decision precipitates the iconic scene where Eliza must choose between endangering her life and losing her son to slavery. In Act one Scene four, Eliza reaches the Ohio

River with her son, but she initially feels unable to cross, as the

Figure 3.1. Eliza Crossing the Ice This image, which probably decorated sheet music, depicts Eliza crossing the Ohio River in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

rapidly flowing river offers only precarious ice floes as a means of crossing. She learns from Phineas, a man sympathetic to her plight, that there will not be a ferry until the morning. Eliza decides to wait and Phineas kindly provides a place for her to do so. Soon, however, Haley, the trader to whom Shelby sold Eliza's son, and another slave catcher arrive, forcing Eliza to act or be (re)captured. Eliza, like the other female characters in this study, chooses to place herself in danger rather than submit to immoral men (Aiken 382-386). She says to herself, "They press upon my footsteps—the river is my only hope! Heaven grant me strength to reach it, ere they overtake me! Courage, my child!—we will be free—or perish!" (386). Eliza is next seen dashing from ice floe to ice floe, as her pursuers stand on the far bank, baffled by her agile crossing.

Eliza's successful crossing of the river is a moment of triumph in an otherwise oppressive world. As with other moments of imperiled femininity examined in this work, tension builds as Eliza's danger becomes more apparent and the moment of choice presents itself. Eliza exhibits an agency that, in the Jacksonian and antebellum theatre, was increasingly demonstrated by the melodramatic hero rather than the heroine, and almost never attributed to black characters. This is significant in a society which, recalling Todd's quote from above, equated femininity with polished manners, not daring exploits. Comments by reviewers suggest that audiences of Aiken's play delighted in Eliza's defiance, as in this piece by the *New York Times*: "The boys are now wrought up to the highest pitch—and, when, finally, *Eliza* is seen with her child, sailing across a blue river on a piece of paste-board ice, and the slave-hunters are shivering and shaking their whips on the shore; one grand cheer goes up from pit and galleries" (qtd. in Hughes 91) (original emphasis). The effect that Eliza's heroics had on audiences of mixed class and gender backgrounds is significant. As I discuss in an earlier section, antebellum audiences were highly

disparate. Their ability to transcend their social differences to rally behind this fugitive slave heroine is remarkable. For just a few moments, the competing identities of the different spectators fell away and a temporary community emerged.

A crucial point that enabled this temporary community to form was its racial dimensions, which brings up what Saidiya Hartman calls the "slipperiness" of empathy (19). Of the three plays analyzed in this chapter, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* relies most strongly on empathy to inform its symbolic use of slave figures to represent problems with freedom generally and the "distressed citizenship" of white populations who felt denied access to it. It is true that Eliza's blackness accounts for her designation as a slave, but it is, arguably, her proximity to whiteness that enables her to seize the agency allotted to this fugitive mother. Eliza's whiteness is a point of conversation both in the play and in its representation. The slave trader Haley describes Eliza as "white and handsome—well brought up. I'd have given Shelby eight hundred or a thousand, and then made well on her" (Aiken 385). Eliza's blackness labels her as a commodity for sale, while her whiteness influences the price she can command. As Lisa Merrill argues regarding Henry Ward Beecher's mock slave auctions, in which he tended to mainly display light-skinned slaves to excite his "audience's" empathy, it was the thought of white bondage that terrified white Americans and incited them to action more frequently than the abstract, less familiar, and often vilified purely black body (Merrill 152). The visual economy of distressed slave femininity as mixed-race allowed actresses to portray these characters without wearing blackface. Hughes notes, "Cast lists confirm that in these early productions, Eliza was portrayed as a conventional melodramatic heroine intended to attract the audience's sympathy; actresses in the leading-lady line always performed the role" (91). Hughes goes on to cite a *New York Times* writer who described the actress playing Eliza as "a very pretty white girl" (qtd. 92).

Hughes argues that scholars who focus on the sublimation of Eliza's racial identity through empathy miss a crucial point about what Eliza represented to her audiences:

> "[Saidiya] Hartman warns that empathetic identification, a practice that many antislavery advocates espoused, may have resulted in 'the dissimulation of suffering through spectacle' because it invited the white individual to put herself in the slave's place, thereby erasing the personhood of the black subject. However, because women lacked access to electoral means of change during this period and were frequently criticized when they expressed themselves in public spaces, I contend that the consumption of abolitionist texts and objects constituted a means by which women could assert themselves politically. In other words, for disenfranchised Americans, the accumulation of *Uncle Tom* images and objects might have been a political act—one that could be reenacted and reprised through the everyday rituals of domesticity. (Hughes 102)

I agree with Hughes that white women and other disenfranchised populations did indeed find political agency through the agency of the fugitive slave, however, Hughes does not acknowledge the extent to which that sympathy is made possible (and palatable) by Eliza's whiteness. Her only concession toward analyzing Eliza's racial identity is to comment that she is "Ambiguously positioned on the scale of subjectivity" (106), while seeming to miss the significance of that ambiguity. Hughes also argues that "The prevalence of artifacts depicting the Ohio River scene demonstrates that women who acquired domestic objects found the quadroon mother's heroics to be both respectable and appealing . . . Conspicuously displayed on the parlor's pianoforte, this illustrated artifact gave Stowe's story a material presence in the domestic sphere" (96, 97). Missing from this assertion of the social acceptability of Eliza is the

possibility that it was also her light skin tone *in combination with* her noble character that made her such a powerful icon.

Although they hold different positions, I agree with both Hartman and Hughes. White women did identify with Eliza politically, and this identification did sublimate her blackness, but Hughes underestimates the degree to which the political identification was itself filtered through race. It is in the crossing of the river, in her show of agency, that Eliza gains her freedom and thus "loses" her blackness. Eliza's slave status marks her as black, but her association with ideal motherhood, which itself was racialized as white, is what allows her ultimately to achieve her freedom. Eliza's interstitial identity, between black and white, is what enables this crossing (her blackness necessitates her pursuit of freedom while her white maternity provides the fortitude necessary to achieve it). In the crossing however, her whiteness becomes the more important element. In the nineteenth century, as Spillers observes, "under conditions of captivity, the offspring of the female does not 'belong' to the Mother," as any child born to a slave mother automatically became property of the slave mother's owner (455). For her to possess maternal agency, then, her whiteness must come to the fore. As Hughes explains, fugitivity was so engaging because it was a revolutionary act that changed an individual from a thing to a person. In the racialized society of the antebellum United States, "personhood," like ideal motherhood, was also coded white. Oddly, this sublimating of her blackness is a sign of respect as it was a recognition of Eliza's new liberty.

Although Eliza is an admirable heroine whose virtues guide her steps to freedom, the optimism of her situation is tempered by her position in what is still a dystopian society, despite her small victory. This is indicated in the fact that Eliza ultimately must leave the United States to achieve true legal liberty; the United States legal system expels her. This intensifies the sense

of the *mise-en-scene* as dystopian, as a pernicious system that will willingly expel this icon of domestic fortitude. The white audiences who have been encouraged to empathize with her plight would perhaps have felt the limitations of their own civic freedom more keenly as they witness a (not quite) white Christian mother unable to legally define herself as a full citizen, thus doomed to remain an outsider.

My point becomes clearer by considering the other population described in the *Times* review—Bowery boys. Hughes' analysis focuses on white, middle-class women, but, as the review suggests, part of the Eliza phenomenon was the approbation shown her by white working class men as well. Where white women could more literally "see themselves" in Eliza, sympathizing with her maternal position and also resembling her in skin tone, white working class men only had skin tone as a laminating point. As I argued above, an important aspect of working-class men considering themselves "freemen" was their racial identity. Because many of them were immigrants or descendants of immigrants, their whiteness was often in question. Eliza, as not quite white by birth but also not obviously black, represented an agency that white working class men so desperately wanted, the fervent desire for which was misperformed in race riots earlier in the era.

While Aiken's play is indeed an adaptation of Stowe's novel and includes similar dystopian elements, it is what I could consider conservatively dystopian. By "conservatively dystopian" I mean that it avoids fully condemning the current social order, sometimes glossing over slavery's evils or distracting from the true polemics of the story with the familiar racial comedy of the minstrel show. Antics such as the black slave Topsy's "breakdowns" rob from the emotional capital established by characters such as Eliza, corroborating prevailing assumptions of racial inferiority circulating in the minstrel show, proslavery literature, racist

caricatures, and laws prohibiting black suffrage. Meer recognizes that the exigencies of the melodramatic form also impoverish the severity of the harsh political realities of the time. Meer uses the example of the contradiction between Cassy's lament of the cruelty of slave law and the portrayal of villains such as Legree to make this point. When Tom arrives on Legree's plantation, Cassy tells him that there is "not a white person here who could testify, if you were burned alive. There's no law here that can do you, or any of us the least good" (Aiken 433). This is a powerful testament to the impotence of non-citizenship and the potential of the law to keep the most vulnerable people unprotected while protecting those committing the most egregious crimes against humanity, such as Simon Legree. After noting Cassy's statement, Meer elaborates:

> However, such moments of genuine protest were mitigated in the plays by the demands of the melodrama. At the end of the novel, Legree is unrepentant and unpunishable (again because there have been no white witnesses), and George Shelby cannot help his remaining slaves, who '[look] dejected, and [walk] off in silence' (*UTC,* 365). But melodramatic villains were customarily punished, and poetic justice kills off the Legrees of both Aiken and Conway, which, as critics have suggested, potentially dulls the antislavery outrage of the plays. If the problem is solved with Legree's death, then there is no larger social question to worry about. (112)

The punishment of the eponymous villain and other choices, such as reducing most of the white women's roles to comic relief to dilute the potential polemics against sentimental domesticity that contemporary critics recognize in the novel, allow the play to resemble basic formulas of the melodramatic form.

A motivating factor behind watering down the political sentiments of the novel was, at least partially, commercial. The manager of the National Theatre could not afford to have his audiences divided in the same way as the public was on the slavery question. Concerted efforts were made to appeal to a wide cross-section of spectators. In addition to maintaining recognizable melodramatic elements, the Aiken version "also used religious exhortations to maintain the tone of moral uplift" (Meer 113). The characters make endless reference to the dogma that faith always leads to redemption, if only in the heaven. This theme of salvation through suffering, as scholar Gay Gibson Cima observes in *Performing Slavery: Activist Women on Antebellum Stages*, was not the only view of Christianity but was certainly the dominant mode in the original novel and the Aiken adaptation (2). As Meer, referencing Bruce McConachie, points out, "the succession of emotional responses solicited—weeping, applauding, terror—would have replicated the experience of a revival meeting" (113). Beyond the text, other measures were taken to attract the growing middle-class audience, such as introducing matinees, banning prostitutes, and making curtain speeches emphasizing the theatre's commitment to moral offerings (113). Whitening Eliza is part of this same strategy, as it gave audiences a heroine in which they could see themselves while selectively not seeing the racial problems her mixed-race identity and slave subjectivity represented. American citizens who resembled the white, middle-class male model of ideal citizenship imperfectly could find temporary solace in the bravery and moral fortitude of a woman so like themselves (or their mothers). Such solace, however, is temporary, as Eliza's eventual settlement outside of the United States speaks to the imperfection of a system that could expel such maternal perfection.

It speaks to the actual force of Stowe's novel, however, that even these concessions designed to attract audiences do not sufficiently sublimate the dystopian tone and trajectory of

the narrative. In Aiken's version, at least, which, based on those scripts and descriptions available to us, is the most faithful to Stowe's original, there is a cumulative sense of incomplete justice and tenuous resolution, not to mention the lack of a happy ending. At best, the ending, which is a tableaux of grief at the death of the hero (itself a melodramatic anomaly), promises only that suffering ends with death. There are no claims made to the vice destroyed, virtue rewarded formula of most melodramas in this era. It is my contention that critics are too quick to dismiss the more radical aspects of Aiken's play and the degree to which these elements illustrate an unhealthy body politic where true citizenship is circumscribed in all instances by unjust laws that, by their very existence, reward behaviors that preclude the possibility of living in right relation with society.

ii. The View from the Inside: Brown's Dystopian Escape

> *"If I wish to stand up and say, 'I am a man,' I must leave the land that gave me birth. If I wish to ask protection as a man, I must leave the American stars and stripes. Wherever the stars and stripes are seen flying upon American soil, I can receive no protection."*
>
> - *William Wells Brown, Address to the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, 1847*[70]

> *"I've not committed any crime, why should I run away?*
> *Oh! Shame upon your laws, dat drive me off to Canada.*
> *You loudly boast of liberty, an' say your State is free,*
> *But ef I tarry in your midst, will you protect me?"*
>
> - *Cato, in* The Escape; or, Leap to Freedom

The above passages, both written and spoken by William Wells Brown, indicate his painful knowledge of his status as an outsider in the "land of the free." A talented writer,

[70] Qtd. in Merrill 140.

powerful speaker, passionate abolitionist activist, and (as of 1854) a liberated slave, Wells Brown was a leader in the fight to both end slavery and promote antiracist relations between black and white societies. Any victories Wells Brown achieved, such as his escape from slavery and his rise to prominence in the abolition movement, were overshadowed by his knowledge that, by law and custom, his skin color nullified his ability to participate fully as a citizen of the United States. He despised such organizations as the African Colonization Society and the African Civilization Society, which sought to resolve America's race problem by sending black Americans to Africa. The notion that African-Americans should want to return to their "home" in Africa was ludicrous; slaves and free black people in the United States may have had African ancestors, but they were born on American soil and knew no other home. In an 1860 address at the New England Colored Citizen's convention, Wells Brown asserted:

> Our right to live here is as good as the white man's, and is incorporated in the Declaration of Independence, in the passage which declares "that all men are created equal . . ." Then let us remain here, and claim our rights upon the soil where our fathers fought side by side with the white man for freedom. Let us remain here, and labor to remove the chains from the limbs of our brethren on the banks of the Mississippi. Yes, let us stay here and vindicate our right to citizenship and pledge ourselves to aid in completing the Revolution for human freedom, commenced by the patriots of 1776, and see our country as free as the air we breathe. ("Remarks" 132)

Wells Brown's commitment to citizenship did not imply a blind patriotic allegiance to the United States. He recognized the Fugitive Slave Act and the Dred Scott decision as legislation designed to ensure that as many black people as possible remained enslaved. In *The Escape; or, a Leap*

for Freedom, Wells Brown addresses the question of "distressed citizenship" created in a nation where the equality promised by its founding documents is woefully absent in its legal and social practices.

Although published in 1858, theatre scholar Lisa Merrill notes that Wells Brown began performing *The Escape* as early as 1847 (Merrill 140, fn. 5). It is possible, however, that Wells Brown suspended performance of *The Escape* for a time, but in my research I found no evidence of it after 1847 until a mention of it in an issue of *The Liberator* dated May 22, 1857. The notice states that Wells Brown was to perform the play a week from the following Monday ("Multiple News Items"). If this was the first reincarnation of the play in some time, the timing may be significant, as May 22, 1857 was a mere ten weeks after the pronouncement of the Dred Scott decision on March 6, 1857.[71] If this is the case, then the Dred Scott decision relates to *The Escape* in a similar way that FSA can be seen to have influenced *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The majority opinion of the case, written by Justice Roger B. Taney contained two explosively divisive pronouncements. First, it held that African Americans, regardless of their status as free or slave, could never be citizens because of their inherent racial inferiority. John H. Van Evrie, a doctor committed to the continuation of slavery and a forerunner of race science, wrote an introduction to the widely-circulated pamphlet containing the decision. He praised the decision:

> [T]he Supreme Court, in the Dred Scott decision, has defined the relations, and fixed the status of the subordinate race forever—for the decision is in accord with

[71] Dred and Harriett Scott, both slaves, initiated the Dred Scott case in 1846, in which they sued the widow of their owner for emancipation on the premise that they lived as residents in the free state of Missouri. Precedent existed for slaves suing in such a manner and winning by appealing to the premise "Once free, always free" operating in the state. The Scotts initially won their case in the Missouri circuit court in 1850, but Mrs. Emerson, their widowed owner, appealed to the Supreme Court of Missouri, who ruled in her favor. Scott renewed his suit in the United States Supreme Court in 1854. Finally, in 1857, a 7 to 2 vote of mostly southern judges found in favor of the defendant Mrs. Emerson. Ironically, Mrs. Emerson privately arranged for their manumission following the court decision. ("Dred Scott Decision").

> the natural relations of the races, and therefore can never perish. It is based on historical and existing facts, which are indisputable, and it is a necessary, indeed unavoidable, inference from these facts. (Van Evrie n.p.)

The dissenting justices both held the opposite view, as reflected in Justice McLean's opinion that "Being born under our Constitution and its laws, no naturalization is required, as one of foreign birth, to make him [Scott] a citizen" (qtd. in "Dred Scott").

The second major pronouncement of the Dred Scott decision was that the federal government could not prohibit slavery in states that did not yet exist when the Constitution was ratified. This effectively overturned the Missouri Compromise of 1820, including its establishment of the Mason-Dixon Line and the prohibition of slavery in new territories and opened up the western territories acquired in 1848 to the slave market, infuriating both abolitionists and supporters of the Free Soil movement. The negation of black citizenship and the prospect of an expanded slave trade created an even sharper division between political parties than already existed and that would not ease with the passage of time. By the time the presidential campaign for the 1860 election was underway, the Dred Scott decision and its implications was as a major topic in speeches and debates. Abraham Lincoln, an opponent of Dred Scott, won the presidency, precipitating the secession of the Southern states from the Union ("Dred Scott"). For Wells Brown and many others, the Dred Scott decision encapsulated the worst hypocrisies of the nation. Rather than devise a story in which slave suffering is redeemed in the afterlife, such as that found in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with *The Escape* Wells Brown presented his audiences with a fugitive slave drama that utilizes the mixed-race slave woman to incite white shame rather than white empathy.

The plot of *The Escape* focuses on Melinda and Glen, a married slave couple owned by different families. Melinda belongs to Dr. and Mrs. Gaines, who also serve as the primary (although not only) antagonists in the piece.[72] The conflict of the play arises out of Dr. Gaines's lust for the mixed-race slave woman Melinda. Dr. Gaines's taste for slave women is apparent in the presence of mixed-race slave children on his property, whom characters visiting the Gaines residence frequently mistake for Dr. Gaines's legitimate children (*The Escape* 136). Mrs. Gaines, who recognizes Dr. Gaines's growing infatuation with Melinda, demands that Dr. Gaines sell Melinda. Dr. Gaines attempts to placate his wife by saying he will sell Melinda while actually forcing her to stay in secret in a cottage across the plantation. Having also recently learned of Melinda's marriage to Glen, he also schemes with his brother-in-law, Glen's owner, to have Glen sold to another plantation far away. Like George in *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* this callous disruption of kinship ties motivates both Melinda and Glen to find freedom through escape. Melinda resists both Dr. Gaines's illicit advances and Mrs. Gaines attempts to poison her, exhibiting incredible agency in overpowering Mrs. Gaines and fleeing the cottage alone and on foot. Aided by friendly whites and joined by another runaway slave, Cato, who begins the play as the Gaines's sycophant and transforming into a free-thinking renegade, Melinda and Glen dodge slave catchers and cross the Ohio River into Canada and thus into freedom.

Before addressing the text itself, pausing to consider the unique performance conventions of *The Escape* creates a context for how mixed-race femininity operates in the dystopia Wells Brown presents. *The Escape* differs from the other plays considered throughout this study in two

[72] With the exception of Mr. White, an abolitionist from Massachusetts, and Mr. Neal, a Quaker from Ohio, both of whom assist the fugitive slave couple in their ultimate escape, all other white characters in the play are minor antagonists. As with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which their participation in slavery made many characters villainous rather than the villainy residing in a single character, this general atmosphere of legally sanctioned immorality highlights the dystopian nature of the world of this play.

major ways, the first major difference lies in the racial identity of the performer himself; Wells Brown presented his play as a dramatic reading in which he was the sole performer. For the first time since Ira Aldridge's attempt at an American acting career, a black man represented black (and white) characters on a public stage. That this performer was also the author compounds the extraordinary nature of the play, in that it privileges a perspective originating in the slave experience rather than a white interpretation of that experience. In the preface to his play, Wells Brown asserts "The main features in the Drama are true. Glen and Melinda are actual characters, and still reside in Canada. Many of the incidents were drawn from my own experience of eighteen years in the South" (*The Escape* 116). In performing a fugitive slave story in a dramatic form rather than the confessional genre of the first-person slave narrative, Wells Brown avoids the spectacularization of the suffering slave body associated with slave narratives (Jones 142). His racial identity also makes an audience's empathy more difficult to maintain, encouraging a sympathetic rather than an identificatory spectatorial reaction that allows Wells Brown's individuality, and his blackness, to remain in view. By extension, the black characters he represents maintain their racial identity while the white characters he mimics are satirized through the estrangement inherent in racial impersonation. Stanton B. Garner, in his introduction to the play in the *Norton Anthology of Drama*, comments on the power of Wells Brown's dramaturgical choices: "in the passion of delivery the voices of the play's characters would have been indistinguishable from the voice of Brown himself. . . . Brown's act of reading his drama on the abolitionist platform enabled him to speak the play's many voices and to assert authorship of its dramatic representations" (113). Garner's observation is supported by a letter written to the *Liberator* in 1860 in favor of Wells Brown's performance. The author, identified only as A. H., comments: "It is scarcely possible for a white man in his utmost devotion so to identify himself

with the bondman as to realize to an audience the awful condition of the slave, as can the slave himself when he has made his way from bondage, and developed those powers which in slavery must have lain dormant till the day of his death" (A.H.). The author recognizes Wells Brown's empirical authority to construct scenes of slavery in a way unavailable to the white interpreter of similar experiences.

The second major difference between *The Escape* and other plays of its time (and in this study) is that it was performed in the setting of an abolition meeting rather than in a theatre. Wells Brown performed as himself, with none of the trappings of the antebellum melodramatic stage. Wells Brown recognized the currency and ubiquity of the theatrical drama in the antebellum era, apparent in his astute observation, "People will pay to hear the Drama that would not give a cent in an anti-slavery meeting" (qtd. in Jones, Jr. 138). This recognition of theatre's cultural capital extended to an awareness of the theatricality of the racialized body. Wells Brown, who was not only a former slave but a light-skinned mulatto, understood that on or off the stage, his body was itself spectacular. In her recent article on the antebellum mixed-race body in performance, Lisa Merrill notes, "William Wells Brown was well aware that onstage, on a speaker's platform, and in daily social encounters his highly distinguishable body was observed, perceived, and visually consumed by those who interacted with him" (139). Rather than being a passive object of (white) public consumption or denouncing the scopophilic nature of the attention, Wells Brown capitalized on the fascination he aroused and manipulated it for his own antislavery ends. Wells Brown combined the already politically charged atmosphere of the abolition meeting with his racially charged body to proactively provide a space for the speaking black subject that was aesthetic rather than oratorical and so represented a variety of subject positions rather than just merely his own personal political rhetoric (or personal suffering).

Wells Brown's powerful reimagining of the performances possible on the abolition platform was made more powerful by the virtuosity with which he performed his readings. Speaking of Wells Brown's performance of both *The Escape* and his other play, *How to Get a Backbone,* A. H. lauds his skill:

> Mr. Brown imitates to perfection the dialect of the negroes, and in presenting the other characters shows a decided talent for dramatic reading. The dramas contain passages of rare beauty. . . . the conscious manhood of the slave, with all his burning thoughts when he resolved to have freedom or death, appeals to the hearers with a power which sets at defiance all the arguments in favor of the vile system. (A. H.)

Although unaware of the irony involved in praising a black man for imitating a dialect proliferated by white impersonators of black slave characters, this commentary acknowledges Wells Brown's virtuosic skill as a performer and as an author.[73]

The form of the play's presentation allowed its content (the dystopian consequences of denying black subjects citizenship in a democratic country) to shine through with a powerful force. Although my analysis is perhaps the first to attribute the specific term "dystopian" to Wells Brown's play, other scholars recognize that *The Escape* illustrates the nation as distressingly out of sync with its democratic ideals. Douglas A. Jones, for example, recognizes that the political perspective of *The Escape*

[73] It should be noted that Wells Brown's use of the "darky" dialect of the minstrel stage functions to point to the dehumanizing effects of slavery rather than portraying ignorance as endemic to black people. Cato, for example, uses his own developing moral conscience to free himself from slavery, despite his dialect-inflected speech. Wells Brown also points out in his preface that "The ignorance of the slave, as seen in 'Big Sally,'" a slave character who speaks in the minstrel dialect, "is common wherever chattel slavery exists" (116). In making this distinction he associates the deformed language of the uneducated with an abusive system of oppression rather than the mental abilities of the black race. Daphne Brooks and Douglas A. Jones, Jr., also comment on Wells Brown's use of dialect as an appropriation for political ends rather than an unreflective adoption of a popular theatrical style.

> deemed the American polity as fundamentally iniquitous and unable to eradicate slavery without a complete social and political reconstitution. In his [Wells Brown's] view, the course of American history yielded a nation in 1858 unwilling to undergo such a wholesale reordering; as a result, *The Escape* cannot project a U. S. without chattel slavery, thereby producing a lasting proslavery effect. (Jones, Jr. 146)[74]

Wells Brown's *Escape* is not only about escaping from slavery, but from the nation that is blind to the action needed to truly accommodate the possibility of black freedom and citizenship. Given Wells Brown's inclusion among those excluded from citizenship by virtue of his racial designation, his own "distressed citizenship" is just as present in the play as the characters populating it, with the narration of the play in his own voice keeps this consideration in the forefront.

Like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, evidence of dystopia is apparent in the disrupted domesticity precipitated by slavery. In Wells Brown's play, Mrs. Gaines is a two-faced, diabolically cruel mistress, exhorting her Christian virtues while in the presence of Reverend John Pinchen one moment and whipping her slaves for minor infractions the next, such as when she resolves to whip Hannah for merely asking the Reverend a question. bell hooks, in *Ain't I a Woman*, notes that "Black females working in close contact with white mistresses were frequently abused for petty offenses" (24). Mrs. Gaines not only whips her slaves but meddles in their lives to suit her

[74] The notion of a "proslavery effect" is Jones, Jr.'s notion that even abolitionists and other antislavery whites operated on premises of black inferiority (or, alternately, white superiority) that disallowed any notions of black equality. Jones, Jr. examines conventions of black representation in the Northern antebellum theatre for evidence of aesthetic investments in the proslavery mindset. See his book, *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination in the Antebellum North* (2014).

own convenience, in total disregard for the slaves' kinship systems. When Dr. Gaines tells her he is planning to sell Sam, Hannah's husband, Mrs. Gaines tells him:

> I'm sure you need not feel so bad at the thought of separating Sam from Hannah. They've only been married eight months, and their attachment can't be very strong in that short time. Indeed, I shall be glad if you do sell Sam, for then I'll make Hannah jump the broomstick with Cato, and I'll have them both under my eye. I never will again let one of my house servants marry a field hand—never! For when night comes on, the servants are off to the quarter, and I have to holler and holler enough to split my throat before I can make them hear. (Wells Brown, *The Escape* 128) (original emphasis)

Hypocritical, cruel, and materialistic, Mrs. Gaines' performance of "mistress" is a twisted version of demure womanhood, drunk with power and the vain accumulation of goods. It is important to note, however, that Mrs. Gaines (whose allegorical name should not be overlooked) did not become this way on her own. The corrupting power of the slave economy and the contradictions it presents to white domesticity enable Mrs. Gaines' (mis)performance of woman as the angelic domestic center.

Dr. Gaines, whose free relations with his female slaves partially accounts for Mrs. Gaines's misperformed and frustrated femininity, is a perfect example of the misperformance of masculinity as it is understood within the spermatic economy. As mentioned in the synopsis above, Dr. Gaines's plantation abounds with his illegitimate slave offspring. He does not even pretend to deny his paternal relationships with these slaves, enjoying the evidence of his virility. This is apparent when a visitor to the house, Major Moore, thinking he is commenting on one of the Gaines's legitimate children, compliments Mrs. Gaines on the resemblance of one of the

slave children to Dr. Gaines. He says, "Madam, I should have known that this was the Colonel's son, if I had met him in California; for he looks so much like his papa," to which Mrs. Gaines replies, "That is one of the niggers sir" (*The Escape* 136). When Dr. Gaines arrives and Mrs. Gaines leaves the room, Major Moore apologizes to Dr. Gaines for his mistake. Dr. Gaines's jovial reply is unsettling in its callous acknowledgement of the regularity of his forced affections on his female slaves implied by the presence of his interracial offspring: "Oh! don't let that trouble you. Ha, ha, ha. If you did call him my son, you didn't miss it much. Ha, ha, ha" (136). Antebellum audiences, especially the middle- and upper-class members likely to attend abolition meetings would have recognized the moral bankruptcy of this man. They would also, likely, be familiar with the writings of such figures as the Reverend John Todd's *Index Rerum* (1834), which emphasized the relationship between the judicious preservation of one's sperm and the preservation of one's moral fortitude and vital energies (Barker-Benfield, *Horrors* 136). Dr. Gaines is careless with his essential energies; and, as the head of the household, this has a degenerative effect on the entire domestic universe of which he is leader.

Also as was the case in *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* the law, serving as the structural framework for the dystopian world of the play, is also at work in *The Escape*. The legality of slavery and the juridical definitions of slaves as property allow for white cruelty and callousness. Aside from Mrs. Gaines's repeated (offstage) whippings of her female slaves, the dystopian effects of such laws can be seen even in the words and deeds of religious leaders. An example arises in the following exchanged between Reverend Pinchen and the slave trader Mr. Walker:

> Rev. Pinchen: What kind of nigger sells best in the Orleans market, Mr. Walker?
>
> Mr. Walker: Why field hands. Did you think of goin' in the trade?

> Rev. Pinchen: Oh, no; only it's a long way down to Natchez, and I thought I'd just buy five or six niggers, and take 'em down and sell'm to pay my travelin' expenses. I only want to clear my way." (Wells Brown, *The Escape* 129)

Slave codes identifying slaves as property effectively transforms the slaves into something akin to traveler's checks or other portable currency. This legally endorsed casual treatment of human beings as commodities by a man of the cloth, someone ostensibly invested in the salvation and condolence of those who suffer is a shocking inversion that demonstrates the utter disjunction between slavery and true Christian teachings.

Melinda is the mixed-race slave woman of this dystopian nightmare of sexual and commercial appetites gone awry. Unlike *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, where the origins of Eliza's mixed-race status in slave rape remain unacknowledged, Wells Brown makes this reality the focus of his drama. As Merrill points out, Wells Brown had a history of using performative means to emphasize the sexual violence experienced by women in slavery, such as when he brought a copy of the satirical "The Virginian Slave" to an exhibit of Hiram Powers's acclaimed sculpture *The Greek Slave* at London's Crystal Palace in 1851 (Merrill 143).[75] Dr. Gaines's lustful intentions toward Melinda are immediately clear, and his obvious interest in Melinda excites Mrs. Gaines's jealousy, who demands, "I want you to sell Melinda. I don't intend to keep that mulatto wench about the house any longer. . . . I've had my life tormented out of me by the presence of that yellow wench, and I'll stand it no longer. I know you love her more than

[75] The image "The Virginian Slave," published in *Punch*, featured a black American slave woman on a pedestal and in chains. She looks upward, as if for salvation, and her face is pained. This created a stark contrast to the white statue of *The Greek Slave* and its pristine representation of white ideal femininity. Wells Brown, upon learning that the United States had offered the sculpture as their contribution to the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, is said to have remarked, "it would have been more to their credit had they kept it at home" (qtd. in Merrill 143).

you do me" (Wells Brown, *The Escape* 128). The insults implied by Mrs. Gaines in referring to Melinda as "mulatto wench" and "yellow wench" show the misdirection of her anger at Melinda when Dr. Gaines is the one to blame. Mrs. Gaines hurls insults at Melinda because she has no power over her husband. According to Spillers, "The nicknames by which African-American women have been called, or regarded, or imagined on the New World scene . . . demonstrate the powers of distortion that the community seizes as its lawful prerogative" (448). This interaction between Dr. and Mrs. Gaines, and its motivation by lust and jealousy, reveals each character's attitude toward Melinda to be due to their own moral weaknesses and not her own. Melinda is subject to these acts of violence by her legal owners, but Wells Brown's portrayal of Melinda is a clear illustration of the inability of the law, and the egregious acts it condones, to conquer the spirit of a slave ready to claim her rightful ownership of herself.

Slave agency is an important theme throughout *The Escape*, and its recurrence is underscored by the lack of any piously submissive "Uncle Tom" character types. As has been examined in other tropes of interstitial femininity in this project, Melinda possesses her greatest measure of agency when circumstances threaten her ability to act in right relation to some perceived ideal. Whereas the other characters considered in this and previous chapters appear to be fashioned in line with white patriarchal discourses of control (whether of the health of the nation through the white feminine body or the geography of the nation itself, epitomized by Pocahontas), Melinda's agency is defined by Wells Brown's commitment to his belief in every person's right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," the very edicts by which he defines citizenship (as noted in the speech cited at the beginning of this section) (" Declaration" 50). Like Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Melinda's willingness to defend herself is in some way connected to her desire to maintain the integrity of her kinship ties. Importantly, however,

Melinda's fugitivity is not elided with an ideal of white maternal femininity for the empathetic enjoyment of the audience, and Melinda must resort to violence to save herself, whereas Eliza is not pushed to such extremes.

The ultimate scene of Melinda's distress occurs in Act three Scene five, when circumstances force her to first fight and then flee from both Dr. and Mrs. Gaines. This is the first of the sensational events that precipitate Glen, Melinda's, and (eventually) Cato's "leap for freedom" across the Ohio River. The scene takes place in "a small cottage on the poplar farm," some distanced removed from the main house (Wells Brown, *The Escape* 137). Dr. Gaines forcibly relocates Melinda to this spot in an attempt to convince his wife that he has sold her. Dr. Gaines, intent on physically possessing Melinda, attempts a crude courtship by offering Melinda clothes and others benefits. He says, "If you are willing to give up all idea of having Glen for a husband, I will set you free, let you live in this cottage, and be your own mistress, and I'll dress you like a lady. Come, now, be reasonable!" (137). It appears Dr. Gaines does not recognize the limits of liberty implied in being an unmarried mistress to a white slave owner, or the proprietary attitude implied in such designations as "*I'll* dress *you* like a lady" (emphasis added). Melinda responds to this proposition coolly, betraying no sense of fear, saying "you can do as you please with the avails of my labor, buy you shall never tempt me to swerve from the path of virtue" (137). When Dr. Gaines answers her defiance by asserting his own dominance ("I'll let you know that you are my property, and I'll do as I please with you"), Melinda answers back with a truly original rebuttal (137). Rather than appealing to providence or Glen to save her, as other heroines in her place might have done, Melinda threatens Dr. Gaines with a curse "that shall haunt you like a specter in your dreams by night, and attend upon you by day; a curse, too, that shall embody itself in the ghastly form of the woman whose chastity you will have

outraged" (Wells Brown, *Escape* 137). Whether Melinda was bluffing we shall never know, for at the end of her speech she mentions her husband, revealing her marriage to Dr. Gaines for the first time. Outraged, Dr. Gaines leaves the cabin, apparently to kill Glen, whom he recently purchased from his brother-in-law.

The reprieve granted to Melinda by Dr. Gaines's sudden departure is short-lived, as Mrs. Gaines soon enters the cabin. Insisting that Melinda's presence in the cabin implies Melinda's complicity in her husband's infatuation with her, Mrs. Gaines attempts to eliminate the "problem" of Melinda by forcing her to drink poison. When Melinda refuses, Mrs. Gaines escalates the situation by drawing a dagger: "I tell you to drink this poison at once. Drink it, or I will thrust this knife into your heart!" (138). Melinda retreats until she discovers a weapon of her own—a broom. Upon finding herself armed (fittingly enough, with a tool she had surely utilized in service to Mrs. Gaines), Melinda regains her defiance and asserts "I will not drink the poison!" (138). The coupling of statement, intention, and action leads to a fight between the women, whereby Melinda "sweeps off Mrs. Gaines's cap, combs, and curls," defeating her nemesis (138).

The above scene closes with stage directions that indicate the curtain falling on the tableau of Melinda standing over a defeated Mrs. Gaines, broom in hand. Wells Brown delays knowledge of the outcome by inserting two scenes between the above and the next time we see Melinda. In Act four Scene one, immediately following Melinda's assault on Mrs. Gaines, the audience witnesses Melinda's husband Glen in chains. The audience learns that he was thus detained after punching Dr. Gaines in response to the doctor's physical assault on him (Wells Brown, *The Escape* 138). It is significant, I argue, that Glen's exercise of agency in a moment of crisis resulted in imprisonment, while, as the audience soon learns in Act four Scene three,

Melinda's violent agency results in her unfettered escape into the forest. Whether consciously or not, Wells Brown follows the formula of imperiled women's agency resulting in the successful thwarting of villainy. As with the other figures examined throughout this project, Melinda's interstitial identity makes her both a target and a threat. She is a slave with the consciousness of, and physical resemblance to, a citizen who believes in her right to freedom and happiness. The fact that Wells Brown performs this encourages the spectator to see this consciousness of desiring freedom as an aspect of blackness, not only of whiteness. Her willingness to act violently in pursuit of those rights rhetorically ensures her success, if only momentarily. This is not to suggest that Glen's agency, his defense of his rights in physically defending himself against the doctor, has less meaning than Melinda's. What I am suggesting, rather, is that imperiled femininity, being rooted in a gendered subject position coded as submissive and beholden to masculinity, has a symbolic value that makes its triumphs more subversive and its failures more tragic.

In Act four Scene three, following a comic scene in which Mrs. Gaines first threatens to divorce Dr. Gaines and then resolves to stay married to him in order to plague him, the audience meets Melinda for the first time since her altercation in the cabin. She is alone in the forest at night. She comments, "This is indeed a dark night to be out and alone on this road. But I must find my husband, I must" (Wells Brown, *Escape* 140). Again, Melinda risks endangerment in order to pursue her right to her kinship relations and her right to fulfill her domestic commitment initiated in her marriage to Glen. There is a brief moment of suspense when Melinda hears footsteps and searches for a place to hide, only to learn that it is Glen. Reunited, the couple renews their commitment to find freedom in Canada. Melinda's character loses some of her

temerity now that Glen is present to take the lead, not diminishing, however, the importance of the agency that brought her back to her rightful place by his side.

The play closes with Melinda, Glen, and Cato successfully boarding a ferry across the Ohio River, waving their hats and shouting cries of freedom (151). Jones, Jr. comments that this "leap to Canada is final, because finality is the way of melodrama" (159). Unlike in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where George and Eliza's escape is a triumphant one in which the audience shares, the finality of, and necessity for, this escape is an indictment to white spectators. The finality that Jones, Jr. refers to is not the finality of a "happily ever after" ending normally associated with melodrama, where villainy is defeated and virtue rewarded. The heroes' expulsion occurs as a result of an undefeatable foe, namely the racist laws of the United States. Wells Brown contextualizes the dystopian character of the heroes' apparent victory in the two scenes preceding the final escape. First, in Act five Scene one, which takes place in a barroom, both pro- and anti-slavery characters engage in a debate that reveals the (white) citizen/ (black) slave dichotomy:

> Mr. White: Sir, if this is a free country, why do you have slaves here? I saw a gang at the door, as I came in.
>
> Second Lounger: He didn't mean that this was a free country for niggers. He meant that it's free for white people. . . . It's right for niggers to be slaves. (142)

When Mr. White, an abolitionist from Massachusetts, argues against the dehumanizing effects of slavery, another barfly demands that Mr. White holds his tongue, saying, "That's treason to the country; that's downright rebellion" (142). Mr. White protests that his constitutional rights allow him free speech. He is answered with a chilling statement by the Barkeeper: "We don't care for

Constitutions nor nothin' else. We made the Constitution, and we'll break it" (Wells Brown, *Escape* 143). Wells Brown illustrates a nation whose divisions cannot even guarantee the rights of all white men (the supposed image of the ideal citizen), let alone those not matching this demographic.

The dystopia created by this system leads Glen to renounce any remnant of allegiance he has to the United States in the next scene, where the author has Glen sing "The Fugitive Slave's Apostrophe to the North Star," written in 1840 by John Pierpont. In the nineteenth century, the North Star came to be associated with fugitive slaves, offering them a celestial guidepost to freedom. Wells Brown's choice to have Glen recite this song is appropriate not only because it illustrates the movement of two slaves on the run, but also because in it the slave denounces the United States: "*This* nation to the Eagle cowers; / Fit ensign! she's a bird of spoil-- / Like worships like! for each devours / The earnings of another's toil. / I've felt her talons and her beak, / And now the gentler Lion seek" (144-145) (original emphasis). The editors of the *Norton Anthology of Drama* in which the play appears include a footnote explaining that the Lion refers to England, whose standard bears three lions. This is not a declaration of a man who harbors hope that he will return home for he has no desire for a nation so hostile to his very right to life, and has lost all beliefs in the cluster of promises embodied in the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. As Jones, Jr. observes, "the play manipulates but ultimately upholds the national status quo, a slave-holding polity unwilling and unable to incorporate free(d) African Americans; as a result, Wells Brown not so implicitly suggests that the campaigns for black citizenship and full inclusion are essentially nugatory" (139). Wells Brown argued for more than an end to slavery; he sought full equality, and shamed his audiences by revealing the extent to which this was impossible by dramatizing the inability for Glen and Melinda, both of whom

embodied the antebellum ideals of hard work, moral fortitude, and domesticity, to be treated as human within the nation's borders.

iii. Dystopian Bodies: The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana

> *"From the moment of its birth the American democracy has appeared to some of its best champions as the perfect subject for Aristotelian tragedy. Could the democracy with an overwhelming reservation [slavery] be anything other than the hero with a fatal flaw?*
>
> - *Sidney Kaplan, "*The Octoroon: *Early History of the Drama of Miscegenation"*

In both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Escape,* audiences encounter dystopian societies predicated on the legalization of slavery and that this framework disrupts narratives of citizenship based in ideals of domesticity and national belonging. *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana* (1859) by Dion Boucicault participates in the same dystopian mood that the other slavery melodramas in this chapter reflect. In this play, however, the focus is not necessarily on slavery itself or the laws that perpetuate it, but on the dystopian consequences of the racial divisions upon which slave law rests. In this play, Boucicault illustrates that the categories of race at work in the United States are permanently in flux, emphasizing that at best racial identity is performative and at worst it is purely imaginary. Whether consciously or not, Boucicault's play argues that the legal division of people by skin color initiates a crisis of seeing as the behaviors enabled by the dehumanization of slaves into property (namely slave rape) creates categories of people who visually belong to the "A" term of the citizen/slave binary but whose invisible markers relegate them to the "not A" term. The play is not about unfair laws but the danger endemic to a nation operating on the basis of laws that are themselves founded in

categorical fictions. With *The Octoroon*, not only is a mixed-race slave woman the dramatic center-piece of the play, but for the first time in a melodrama it is her legal status as mixed-race, and not her pursuit of personal freedom, that is her defining dramatic element and the source of her pathos. Zoe's legally defined racial identity and its implications impact her, and those around her, so negatively that it ultimately drives her to suicide. Where Daphne Brooks and Joseph Roach identify this plot line as a convenient way to expel the excessive body of the octoroon (being neither fully black nor fully white but something *other*, what I have called a third-term in this project), I propose that Boucicault uses Zoe's third-term status and her suicide to illustrate the tragic waste of a beautiful life due to the internalization of hostile juridical categories, not a *deus ex machina* designed to eliminate a dramaturgical problem. Zoe is the epitome of "distressed citizenship," relief from which is found, in this dystopian society at least, only in death.

As the title indicates, the play takes place in Louisiana, specifically on the plantation Terrebonne belonging to the Peyton family. George Peyton, a nephew to the deceased owner, comes to Terrebonne following his uncle's death and George's own bankruptcy. Instead of a peaceful homecoming, George encounters an estate troubled with its own financial woes. He meets and falls in love with Zoe, who he assumes is a white ward of the family. He soon learns that she is part black and so, due to the antimiscegenation laws in place in Louisiana since 1724, they cannot marry[76]. In the meantime, the plantation overseer Jacob McClosky, who harbors an insatiable lust for Zoe and is a shareholder of the Terrebonne debt, discovers that Zoe's manumission papers are invalid. This leads to Zoe being sold at auction along with the rest of Terrebonne. George, in the old pattern of ineffectual hero, cannot stop the sale. Believing

[76] This information comes from a University of Idaho website, "American Anti-miscegenation (Anti-Mixed Marriage) Laws."

herself to be destined for McClosky's sexual appetites and knowing her love for George is doomed regardless owing to her racial identity, Zoe takes poison and dies. Although Zoe does not receive justice, poetic justice is enacted in the closing moments of the play following Zoe's death. In an earlier subplot, the evil McClosky kills a mulatto slave named Paul in order to obtain a letter that would free Terrebonne of its debts. At first an Indian character, Whanotee, who was Paul's companion, is suspected, but with the aid of a camera McClosky is identified as the killer. The final moments of the play show Whanotee standing over a fallen McClosky, enacting his savage form of vigilante justice, apparently the only form of justice possible in a world that stands, as one character describes it, "on the selvage of civilization" (Boucicault 491).

Boucicault wrote and presented *The Octoroon* in 1859. The play premiered at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York on December 6, 1859, a mere three days after the hanging of John Brown in Virginia following the Harper's Ferry debacle; "the curtain rose on *The Octoroon* . . . just as Brown's coffin began the last lap on the journey North to the quiet Adirondack farms" (S. Kaplan 547).[77] The Harper's Ferry incident reflected the escalating tensions in a nation on the brink of war. Boucicault's play also emerged within the context of the heated campaign leading up to the 1860 presidential election, in which the Dred Scott decision and the Fugitive Slave Act were hotly debated issues for all candidates. Having arrived in the United States in 1853 and remaining at least until 1861 when he took *The Octoroon* to London (Richards 445), it is possible that Boucicault encountered the pamphlet of Justice Taney's decision in the Dred Scott case and both Frederick Douglass's and Abraham Lincoln's published responses to it, all of

[77] According to the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: "Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, was the site of John Brown's 1859 raid. Then part of Virginia, Harpers Ferry was home to a federal armory. Brown and his followers aimed to seize munitions at the armory and incite slaves to escape, but they were soon overwhelmed by local and federal forces. Many of Brown's men were killed in the ensuing conflict, and Brown and six others were later tried for treason and executed" ("Harper's Ferry").

which were in regular circulation from 1858 to 1860, with increasing regularity as the presidential campaign heated up ("Dred Scott").

Given the politically charged atmosphere in which it emerged, the title of the play, and the ubiquitous posters advertising its most sensational elements, it is no surprise that "Boucicault's play was a hit before it opened" (S. Kaplan 548). This pre-production success is almost certainly due to the controversy over the play's topic, as any aesthetic or literary merits it might have were as yet unknown. Conflicting statements from Boucicault make it difficult to pinpoint whether political convictions motivated his choice of subject or whether he merely capitalized on the nation's discord for monetary gain. (If he had, he would not be the first, given the financial motivation behind the plethora of *Uncle Tom*s).[78] Regardless of Boucicault's authorial intention or financial motivations, the play hit upon the country's rawest nerve. According to Sidney Kaplan, "By spring the following year [1860], the title of Boucicault's play would enter the national vocabulary," its topicality setting off an avalanche of commentary and copycat performances, with pirated versions appearing as far west as San Francisco (554, 556).

Although control over the impact, message, and production of *The Octoroon* quickly slipped from Boucicault's grasp, I argue that there are indications that a critique of slave law lies at the heart of *The Octoroon*, and that this critique, if not as severe as it could be, was not

[78] In one letter, in which Boucicault defends himself against a critic of the proslavery *Herald* newspaper, Boucicault countered that he had spent enough time in the country to feel "capable of writing a work upon American society," in which slavery happened to be "an essential element of society." He continues on, asserting that it is the job of drama to comment on society: "I believe the drama to be a proper and very effective instrument to use in the dissection of all social matters. The Greeks thought so, who founded it; Moliere thought so when he wrote the *Tartuffe*; and every humble follower of theirs thinks so too" (qtd. in S. Kaplan 549). This statement, however, was contradicted by later actions and statements made by Boucicault, including he and his wife Agnes Robertson (who played Zoe) leaving the production after the first week and publishing statements indicating they were unaware of the divisive potential of the play and wished to see it closed. Robertson notes in her autobiography that she received letters threatening her assassination if she continued to perform the role of Zoe, giving some credence to the couples' reservations regarding the effect of the drama. Jeffrey H. Richards, in his introduction to the play, conjectures that the couple was financially motivated, and left the production because they were unsuccessful in negotiating for more money (446).

accidental. As with George L. Aiken and William Wells Brown, authorship matters. Aiken, writing to capitalize on the popularity of Stowe's novel for commercial ends, emphasized the sentimental and sensational aspects of slavery, while Wells Brown's experience as a former slave struggling for civic equality influenced the focus on the (im)possibility of black citizenship found in *The Escape*.[79] Boucicault's own particular authorial position and motivations influence themes and events featured in *The Octoroon*. His status as an outsider allowed him a perspective unavailable to playwrights born and raised in the United States. Like other European-born writers such as Frances Trollope, Charles Dickens, and Alexis de Tocqueville, Boucicault reports an interpretation of what he witnessed. It is possible that, during his stay in New Orleans in 1855 and again in 1857 (Roach 217), Boucicault witnessed slave auctions and/or "fancy-girl" auctions. In the latter spectacle, light-skinned quadroon or octoroon slave women were sold at auction. They were intended to be sexual companions for the men purchasing them, which partially explains men's willingness to pay exorbitant sums well above the going rate for field hands (215). Being in the theatre industry, Boucicault surely at least heard of the special evenings some theatres held for white men and their "fancy-girl" companions, during which desegregated seating was suspended and white women were not allowed (217). Always the keen observer, it appears that Boucicault saw in the New Orleans culture evidence of the deep contradictions endemic to the upheaval characterizing the whole of antebellum America. That he also recognized the attention (and ticket sales) that dramatizing such events as an auction would attract does not discount the overall construction of the play and the critique that underlies the sensational veneer.

[79] Although Stowe did not contribute to or approve George L. Aiken's dramatized version of her story, the incidents and themes descend directly from her novel and so maintain at least a residual resemblance of her authorial perspective.

Understanding *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana* as a critique (even if an incomplete one) of a society shaped by legalized slavery makes it an important cultural artifact for understanding the turmoil over slavery and citizenship that characterizes the antebellum era. The thematic and visual landscape of the play suggests a realm in which, as the Dred Scott decision indicates, citizenship and the rights inherent in it was a question of racial belonging in the eyes of the law. Boucicault's play utilizes Zoe's suffering as the ultimate indicator of the injustices enabled by systems of civic belonging predicated on the unstable evidence of, to borrow William Shakespeare's term, "ocular proof."[80] That the subject of the play is not slavery alone but the racial performances upon which the slavery system sustains itself indicates the presence of a critical eye, an observation made in other scholars' criticisms of the play. Anthony Kubiak, in his book *Agitated States: Performance in the American Theatre of Cruelty*, asserts, "the play deals with more than slavery. Racial difference, and the roots of racism in particular, are explored in startling ways" (90). Daphne Brooks echoes Kubiak when she states, "Race emerges, in *The Octoroon*, as an elaborate stunt of gargantuan and highly spectacular proportion" (32). As I discuss throughout the following analysis, the events of the play indicate the performative nature of whiteness as well as blackness.

An early indicator that the law is in question as a stable institution is a significantly absent presence in the play. In the opening scene of the play, the audience learns that the family patriarch, Judge Peyton, is dead. We also learn that he had a penchant for careless spending not only with money but also of sperm. Zoe, the daughter created as a result of his liaison with her quadroon slave mother, stands as evidence of this undisciplined use of his resources. (That this

[80] There is at least a slight connection between *The Octoroon* and *Othello, the Moor of Venice. Sidney* Kaplan notes that the program for the performance of *The Octoroon* at the Winter Garden theater featured the quote, "nothing extenuate, nor aught set down in malice." This points to Boucicault's (or, perhaps, the management's) realization of the thematic similarity of *The Octoroon* to *Othello*.

"liaison," as I have just referred to it, was probably nonconsensual is not addressed. This is an example of the incompleteness of Boucicault's critique.) Like other white male characters in the dystopian slavery plays, the absent patriarch's moral compass is skewed by its orientation toward legalized slavery. In this instance the patriarch's relationship to the law is even more fraught, as he was a judge and thus professionally beholden to both abide by and implement the law. By law Judge Peyton ought to have treated Zoe as the slave she is; instead, he developed a fatherly affection for her and drafted paperwork declaring her manumission. While this defies the spirit rather than the letter of slave law (Zoe being his property, he would have been free to manumit her if he so desired), Judge Peyton did defy the letter of the law by educating Zoe and, in so doing, essentially raising her to emulate the performative conventions of whiteness. The judge's oscillation between taking advantage of the law to suit his whims (treating slave women as his property) and defying the law for the same reason underscores the fragile and arbitrary nature of the law, an arbitrariness that becomes even more obvious as Zoe's very existence blurs the absolute categories of black and white upon which it depends.

The dependability of race as a stable signifier is put in question in the very opening moment of the play. George Peyton, the play's male protagonist, comments on the many slave children that occupy the front yard, asking, "Were they all born on this estate?" An elderly slave, Pete, scoffs at this question, replying "Born here—dem darkies? What, on Terrebonne? . . . dem black tings never was born at all; day swarmed one mornin' on a sassafras tree in the swamp; I cotched 'em; day ain't no count. Don't believe dey'll turn out niggers when dey're growed; they'll come out sunthin' else." Hearing this, Grace, a slave woman standing nearby, intervenes: "Yes, Mas'r George, dey was born here; and old Pete is fonder on 'em dan he is of his fiddle on a Sunday" (Boucicault 451). Pete's remarks, which echo Topsy's own description

of herself in Aiken's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, echo racist preconceptions of black people as less than human. Grace's contradiction implies that Pete does not believe his own words and so casts these truisms into doubt.

George's position as an outsider makes him dependent on others to educate him on the culture of which he is a guest. Right from the start, he is made to doubt that what he sees or is told is in fact true. The audience views the scene through his eyes, estranging the familiar setting of plantation life. George resembles Patrick Parrinder's description of a hero in a Victorian dystopian romance. According to Parrinder:

> The protagonist visits a supposedly utopian society, falls in love there—these stories are both exotic and sexual romances—and, in most cases, narrowly escapes to tell the tale. The protagonist is invariably male, and both his entry and exit are arduous and challenging. The nature of the utopian/dystopian society comes as a distinct shock to him; at first it is merely strange and eccentric, but the more his understanding develops, the more it seems threatening and horrifying. (7)

Parrinder goes on to note that "the underlying threat and horror are fleetingly glimpsed at the moment of entry into the new society" (7). This is apparent when George senses something is wrong or out of place in how the Sunnysides, neighbors from a nearby plantation, treat Zoe. When the Sunnysides enter the scene, having arrived to have breakfast with the Peyton family, they do not acknowledge Zoe's presence. Assuming her to be a white unmarried young woman, the same as Dora Sunnyside, George is confused and a bit outraged as to their impolite lack of acknowledgement. When George protests that they have not greeted Zoe, Dora greets Zoe then asks her to take her shawl, further confusing George. Finally, Mr. Sunnyside comments on

Zoe's looks, an insult that proves too much for George. He calls Mr. Sunnyside out on this *faux pas*, causing Mr. Sunnyside to react with confusion of his own. When George insists, "It may be considered offensive," Mrs. Peyton intervenes, saying, "My nephew is not acquainted with our customs in Louisiana, but he will soon understand" (Boucicault 455). George thinks he is seeing a wealthy white woman being treated dishonorably by another ostensibly white family and cannot understand why Mrs. Peyton permits this. As Mrs. Peyton points out, only an outsider would make this mistake. He cannot "read" the performances in which the others are fluent; rather, he only knows that what he sees deviates uncomfortably from his own knowledge of appropriate performances of white etiquette towards other whites.

George's outsider status is especially important to how the declaration of love scene in this romance plays out. Because of his ignorance, George serves as an audience before whom Zoe performs her blackness (an identity, it should be noted, that she believes to be obvious to everyone who looks upon her). In Act two, Dora, who cannot understand why George does not appear to have romantic feelings for her, asks Zoe to find out his feelings. Instead, when Zoe and George are alone, George confesses his love for Zoe, prompting her to enact what is generally considered a confession of her blackness. Both Kubiak (94) and Brooks (33) analyze Zoe's actions as revelatory, implying that she divulges her blackness to George as if it is a secret she keeps. I identify this more as a pedagogical rather than a confessional moment, the significance being that Zoe believes herself to be marked in a way she, in previous pedagogical moments, has been taught are both obvious and indelible. When George says he loves Zoe, she asks, "Do you know what I am?" George answers that he knows she is an illegitimate daughter of the judge. Zoe, alarmed by his ignorance of her true identity, says "you must *learn* what I thought you already knew" (Boucicault 466) (emphasis added). Zoe then enacts an interactive

demonstration for George, what Joseph Roach calls "a frank fact-finding tour of her body" (219). Zoe teaches George the significance of the marks on her body—namely the blue marks on her nails and the blue tinge to the whiteness of her eyes. She explains,

> That is the ineffaceable curse of Cain. Of the blood that feeds my heart, one drop in eight is black—bright red as the rest may be, that one drop poisons all the flood; those seven bright drops give me love like yours—hope like yours—ambition like yours— . . . but the one black drop gives me despair, for I'm an unclean thing—forbidden by the laws—I'm an Octoroon! (Boucicault 467)

Zoe teaches George what the law has already taught her; she sees herself as the law does. The law which marks her as black undermines Zoe's performance of whiteness, which she learned on Judge Peyton's knee and at Mrs. Peyton's table, creating an internal division within Zoe that she feels compelled to endure. Oddly, in choosing to accept the law's definition of her, she betrays a conception of herself as a citizen, not a slave. If she were a slave, she would, presumably, owe the law no allegiance (just as she would have no rights to its protections). This explains her alarm when she learns in Act three that she is legally still a slave (475).

The instability of color as a marker emerges in the above scene and prefigures the crisis of identity epitomized in the auction scene in Act three. As Kubiak points out, in Zoe's "lesson" to George, "black is not white, white is not white, red blood is not red" (90). The instability of color points to a larger instability of the equation of what is seen with what is knowable, and thus to the unreliability of performance. The audience, after all, cannot see the marks to which Zoe refers: "They [the audience] (we) are being told that the visible should be rejected as false based upon the truth of another [sic] visible that also remains hidden from us, a visible that is paradoxically invisible: here vision disarticulates itself" (Kubiak 94). This is a reflexive moment

for the audience, who still sees what George sees. George responds to Zoe's description of the marks that categorize her as black by insisting that they merely accentuate her beauty (Boucicault 467). The color hierarchy that serves as the phantasmatic foundation of Louisianan (and, by extension, American) society from this point on suffers an accelerating deterioration, subtly begun with what I read as Pete's carnivalesque usurpation of black stereotypes at the top of Act one and ending with the image of Whanotee standing over a white man whose own unlawful actions epitomize him as an anticitizen. To return to Kubiak once more, "While whiteness in these instances might usually connote superiority, civilization, and culture, here [in *The Octoroon*] it indicates depravity, racism, and murder" (95).

The plot of *The Octoroon* reaches its climax in the famous auction scene. In night after night of sold out houses, audiences watched an apparently white woman climb onto the same table where they first witnessed her sharing a family meal in Act one, to be sold as if she were identical to the slaves that preceded her on the improvised auction block. Two other important events precede this scene, however, the first being the revelation at the end of Act two that Zoe is a slave, not free, as she thought she was (Boucicault 475). She always knew she was not white but never imagined that she was also not free. Zoe's shock at the revelation leaves her nearly speechless as the scene draws to a close. The second important event occurs in the next scene, what I call the pre-auction scene. The scene is a comic one and draws on the conventions of minstrelsy—blackface, "negro dialect," and buffoonery. In the scene, the slave Pete addresses the other slaves on the plantation. He informs them that the plantation is scheduled for auction and that they are to be sold along with it. This announcement, understandably elicits cries of despair from the gathered slaves. Pete cuts them off immediately, demanding harshly that they stop crying. He tells them that if they cry and holler, they limit their chances of being sold to

good homes. To avoid this, he gives them a script to follow: "Cum, for de pride of de family, let every darky look his best . . . so dem strangers from New Orleans shall say, Dem's happy darkies, dem's a fine set of niggers; every one say when he's sold, 'Lor' bless dis yer family I'm gwine out of, and send me as good a home'" (Boucicault 477). Although the scene tries to dilute the evils of slavery by having Pete extol the virtues of the Peytons as benevolent slave owners, what is significant here is Pete's recognition of racial performance to the slavery system. He knows what makes slaves appear valuable and directs his fellow slaves to try and emulate this for their own ends. Significantly, Zoe witnesses this "rehearsal." She exclaims, "O! Must I *learn* from these poor wretches how much I owe, and how I ought to pay the debt?" (478) (emphasis added). I interpret this as Zoe learning how to appropriately perform her racial identity at the auction, despite the terror she feels at the thought. When the audience sees Zoe stand up at auction, they know this is a performance she has seen enacted before.

While the auction scene is the dramatic climax, it is in the play's denouement that Zoe's interstitial agency emerges most strongly. The lecherous McClosky succeeds in winning the bid for Zoe in the auction. With her virginity and virtue imperiled by McClosky's ownership of her, Zoe, like the white virgins of the Gothic plays, takes drastic steps to avoid this fate. She seeks out poison from the slave Dido and drinks it down. Unbeknownst to Zoe, McClosky is discovered to be Paul's murderer and to have hidden a letter informing the Peytons of a large payment made to them on an old debt. Both of these events mean that Zoe no longer belongs to McClosky and that the Peytons have a legal right to free her. This knowledge comes to Zoe too late, however, as she has already imbibed the poison. In order to avoid the fate of a black slave (namely, rape at the hands of her white master), Zoe emulates what other "white" heroines before her have done—she chooses death over ruined virtue. Boucicault presents a complex

interplay of racial performativity in which it is difficult to decide to which category Zoe rightly belongs. Her legal identity defines her as black (she is still a slave) but her virtuous agency is a convention of white performance. In her tragic death scene George comments on how dying is mixing her coloring even further: "Zoe, you are suffering—your lips are white—your cheeks are flushed" (Boucicault 493).

Brooks interprets the whitening of Zoe's lips and the change in her eye color as a conversion to whiteness: "By these means, Boucicault's play aims to rein in the very excess it has produced in its title character" 41). What this analysis does not consider, however, is that Boucicault did not create the matrix in which someone of mixed-race blood is excessive; on the contrary, the entire play elaborates on how this excessiveness is a juridical category. Even as her features grow paler, Zoe does not lose the internalized sense of herself as non-white. With her last breath she says to George, "you may, without a blush, confess your love for the Octoroon!" (Boucicault 494). She immediately dies, leaving the audience mourning the tragedy that such a beautiful "white" woman should lose her life when her virtue remains intact. Like Aiken, Boucicault depends on white empathy in this moment, but in Boucicault's case, I argue, it is for the purpose of pointing to the fictions underscoring racial difference rather than sublimating them.

Conclusion

The antebellum slavery melodramas analyzed in this chapter utilize mixed-race femininity to investigate the truly dystopian and disordering effect slavery has on a democratic nation rhetorically devoted to individual liberty. The three very different treatments of the same

theatrical trope suggest the extent to which a single theatrical figure can be manipulated to serve competing rhetorical ends. The white virgin and the helpful Indian princess, while not identical in the various plays in which they appear, are represented with much more consistency than the mixed-race slave women of antebellum melodramas. While the diverse perspectives and motivations of the playwrights no doubt partially account for this, I think the primary reason lies in the aspect of the mixed-race slave woman that differentiates her most completely from the other two femininities; namely, her enslaved status, which is what makes her vulnerable to the kind of sexual assault that presumably precipitated her own conception. While these figures display agency at key moments, it is a circumscribed agency exercised from within a state of bondage. The constant association of sexual availability with half-black women in mid-nineteenth-century plays creates, as bell hooks, Hortense Spillers, Daphne Brooks, and Saidiya Hartman all argue, a representational legacy that systematically devalues black womanhood.[81] While perhaps not as purposive as the systematic rape of black slave women that "had as its goal the demoralization and dehumanization of black women," the representational history of mixed-race and other modes of black femininity is just as violent (hooks, *Ain't* 27). As Evelynn Hammonds reminds us, "these constructs have material effects on black women's lives" (178). The extremity of representation endured by mixed-race slave women emphasizes the degree to which all of the femininities analyzed in my project are abstractions whose renderings serve ends external to femininity but whose legacies continue to materially affect actual women.

[81] See Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"; Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*.

CONCLUSION

Damsels in Distress: Theatre, Anxiety, and the Feminine discusses the ubiquity of the female body in nineteenth-century popular theatre in the first formative decades of the United States. The category I refer to as "interstitial femininity" encapsulates part of the kaleidoscope of femininities that are significant to United States national discourse regarding who belongs in the superior term of the American/not American binary. In so doing, I emphasize the exclusionary practices informing that binary. Theatrical femininity was a significant means by which many Americans negotiated the inside/outside binary informing the American/not American binary, which was itself at the center of the dominant legal, moral, social, and aesthetic formulations of the national narrative.

"The body is never only what we think it is . . . Illusive, always on the move, the body is at best *like* something" remarks Dance studies scholar, Susan Leigh Foster in her introduction to *Choreographing History*. She continues her provocative insight: "Thus, the metaphors, enunciated in speech or in movement, that allude to it are what give the body the most tangible substance it has" (4). In the nineteenth-century, the metaphors of control permeating the discourse on hysteria, of savage inferiority that justified genocidal expansion, and of freedom that infused the slavery debate all contributed overwhelmingly to the conventions regulating how the feminine bodies associated with these metaphors appeared on stage in the nineteenth century. All of these metaphors were themselves saturated with preconceptions regarding the relationship of gender, class, and race to the mechanics of American democracy.

The ambivalent representations considered in this project emphasize again and again the extent to which Americans perceived that the ideals ensconced in the nation's founding documents were imperfectly realized at best, and actively exclusionary at worst. The persistent

negotiation of this potent ambivalence through the female body asks us to consider seriously how representations of femininity are rarely without some defining perspective external to femininity itself.

I pursued this project because it would not be ignored. Although the focus of the current work is firmly in the nineteenth century, the considerations which led me to this era first appeared while studying twentieth- and twenty-first century western feminist playwrights. My attempts to analyze contemporary feminist interrogations of inherited gender tropes kept pushing me back to some of the sources of the tropes themselves. Today's most significant plays by women writers, such as *In the Blood* (2000) by Suzan-Lori Parks, *In the Next Room: or, the Vibrator Play* (2010) by Sarah Ruhl, Lisa Loomer's *The Waiting Room* (2007) and *Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1990) by Monique Mojica, provide dramaturgical critiques of how femininity functions in representational matrixes determined by other, non-feminine agents. These playwrights' investigations of such figures as the mulatta, the hysterical woman, and the stereotypical Indian princesses encouraged me to unearth more about these figures. Finding that these tropes are inextricably intertwined with the history of identity and national formation in the United States, I wanted to know what precipitated the representational traditions that have had so much influence in the past two centuries and that feminist playwrights are unpacking today.

When I began my research, the lack of critical material on theatrical femininity in early American dramaturgy convinced me that this was a project that needed scholarly attention. While historians have begun the work of including women in the historical record with biographies of actresses and other female theatre professionals, the range of characters played by these actresses and the historical, political, and cultural significance of these tropes has received comparatively little attention. Some exceptions to this are, of course, the excellent works which

guided me in this project, such as Daphne Brooks' *Bodies in Dissent* and M. Susan Anthony's *Gothic Plays and American Society*. Brooks spends time in her first chapters analyzing the representational context which post-Civil War black female performers worked within and against, with her expository work serving to augment the significant contributions made by the performers she profiles. Even Brooks' exemplary work, however, uses the pre-Civil War decades as an entry point rather than the focus of her volume. As a further example, chapter one of my project would not exist without the pioneering work Susan M. Anthony completed on the Gothic plays. As her book is a study of Gothic plays generally and not solely focused on femininity in the plays, however, I found there was still more work that needed to be done in this era. Both Brooks and Anthony connect gendered and racialized representations of women to prevalent political and social ideologies. This inspired me to present this same sort of analysis, except in a survey-style overview rather than considering a single genre or time period. It is my hope that this helps instigate a further consideration of what the different ways of writing and watching women in the nineteenth century meant for the past and continues to mean for the present and future of Americans and other citizens around the world.

Increasing the visibility of female character types in nineteenth-century dramaturgy has several implications for American theatre history studies. For example, given that the majority of authors and audience members at this time were male, it asks us to consider seriously the extent to which masculine preconceptions regarding gender influenced representations of women at this time. This point destabilizes essentialist notions of gendered identities, as it suggests that female character types of this time have perhaps more to tell us about the men who desired their creation than the women they ostensibly represent. Or at the very least, it implies that the ways in which nineteenth-century society thought about and saw women was influenced by non-

women. The masculinist influence of this era also encourages us to consider the extent to which this influence is still at work today. As recently as 2014, The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media released a study stating that in the United States film industry, women represented only 9.1% of all writers and 9.1% of all directors (Smith, et. al.). Stories about women, then, are still being told mostly by men, an exigency that affects both representation and perception.

Another contribution of this study for American theatre studies is that it continues the project of taking spectacle seriously, a task for which Anthony Kubiak's *Agitated States* and Amy E. Hughes' *Spectacles of Reform* serve as important precedents. The relationship that I investigate between spectacle and imperiled femininity presents a means by which to apprehend the motives behind these aesthetic conventions. Female characters who risk the temporary disorder inherent in scenes of spectacular danger but whose actions ultimately support a larger sense of order by the plays' ends are theatrical embodiments of the deep ambivalences that informed national and individual identity in the United States. Spectacle creates an affective milieu in which to represent these ambivalences and the tropes of imperiled femininity associated with them. Where Aristotle relegates spectacle to the lowest rung of his dramaturgical hierarchy, nineteenth-century theatre forms reversed that equation. The centrality of spectacle, Hughes argues, signals to today's scholars the importance of considering "spectacle as methodology: a unique system of communications, employed in myriad contexts, that rehearses and sustains conceptions of race, gender, and class in extremely powerful ways" (4). Adding to the discourse that supports spectacle as worthy of analysis also encourages its critical treatment in today's media, in which some of the world's highest grossing plays and films are themselves merely newer examples of the spectacle at the core of the nineteenth-century melodramatic mode.

While my project gestures to significant links between theatrical femininity and the female bodies that portray these characters, more work in this arena needs to be done. However, an important impetus of this project, as I describe above, was to lay the groundwork for further consideration of the modes of femininity available for analysis and what this means for both female performers and women in general. Susan Leigh Foster asserts, "Each body's distinctive pronouncements at a given moment must be read against the inscription, along with others, it continuously produces" (5). The "inscriptions" I consider here are the tropes of interstitial femininity that garnered so much spectatorial attention and stood at the center of the theatre's most fantastic (and expensive) moments of spectacle. Contemplating the plethora of feminine subject positions that white nineteenth-century actresses inhabited brings into greater focus the versatility demanded of these performers, the racial politics of representations of femininity in the nineteenth century, and also the weight of this representational history on the bodies of women who served as referents for the stage characters enacted by stage professionals. *Damsels in Distress* emphasizes the broad spectrum of female characters available for analysis, providing further material by which to understand both the plays of the time and the performances required to bring them to life.

Beyond what this study contributes to theatre history and criticism, *Damsels in Distress* adds to the growing archive of work that places gender and the intersecting influences of race, class and history at the forefront of its analyses. If gender, class, race, and other identity categories are the primary modes by which societies gauge social belonging, then any study that also considers these as primary analytical modes exposes the limitations and advantages of defining belonging by these means. In the United States and many other countries, gender functions within a larger national narrative that determines how and if individuals can participate

in the rights, protections, and benefits of that society. What I have brought into focus is the importance of representation itself to maintaining these narratives, and the sometimes harmful fictions that representations can help normalize over time. Representation affects perception of real people, creating expectations, assumptions, and "truths" that influence how we treat one another. Michel Foucault, in his essay "Theatricum Philosophicum," calls the perceptions that cling to bodies "phantasms," which he says "form the impenetrable surface of bodies; and from this process, simultaneously topological and cruel, something is shaped that falsely presents itself as a centered organism" (170). This concept refers to the power of representation to distort perception, and the importance of always being critical of it. In the United States today, police practices such as the "stop and frisk," which encourage officers to stop men of color and search them regardless of probable cause, are informed by phantasmatic associations of young male blackness with criminality and aggression, a preconception supported by popular representations that can be traced to the minstrel show and beyond. In "the land of the free," so many find their participation in democracy circumscribed by the phantasmatic weight of American representational history. *Damsels in Distress* contributes to the work of others who connect contemporary injustice with an inherited legacy of oppression enabled by representation. Perhaps by demystifying the past with the hindsight available to the present, United States citizens can work beyond essential categories and reformulate national narratives in terms of true democratic inclusion rather than hierarchical exclusion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Abbott, John S. C. *The Mother at Home; or, the Principles of Maternal Duty*. New York: Arno P & the New York Times, 1972. Family in America. Ed. David J. Rothman and Sheila M. Rothman. Print.

A. H. "Letter from West Randolph." *The Liberator* 35 (31 Aug 1860): n.p. *Accessible Archives.* Accessible Archives, Inc., 2016. Web. 7 April 2016.

Aiken, George L. *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life Among the Lowly*. In Early American Drama. Ed. by Jeffrey H. Richards. NY: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. 374-443.

Barker, James Nelson. *The Indian Princess: or, La Belle Sauvage*. In *Early American Drama*. Ed. by Jeffrey H. Richards. NY: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. 114-165

---. *The Tragedy of Superstition*. *American Drama Full-Text Database*. Web. 2 Jan 2014.

Barnes, Charlotte Mary Sanford. *The Forest Princess: or, Two Centuries Ago*. *American Drama 1714-1915.* ProQuest LLC, 2000-2016. Web. 5 October 2015.

Beecher, Catherine E. *A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the use of Young Ladies at Home and at School*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1846. Print.

"Bertram, or the Castle of St. Aldobrand; the Rev. R. C. Maturin." *The Christian Journal, and Literary Register (1817-1830).* 22 Jan 1817. American Periodicals Database. Web. 21 Feb 2014.

Boucicault, Dion. Letter to A.C. Wheeler. 28 January ca. 1872. A. C. Wheeler Letters from Others. MS Thr 950 (10). Houghton Library, Harvard University. Print.

---. *The Octoroon: or, Life in Louisiana*. In *Early American Drama*. Ed. by Jeffrey H. Richards. NY: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. 449-494.

---. *The Poor of New York*. Samuel French, 1857. *American Drama 1714-1915*. ProQuest, LLC, 2000-2016. Web. 5 June 2015.

Branagan, Thomas. *The Excellency of the Female Character Vindicated: Being an investigation relative to the cause and effects of the encroachments of men upon the rights of women, and the too frequent degradations and consequent misfortunes of the Fair Sex.* 1808. *Everyday Life and Women in America ca 1800-1920.* Web. 28 Sept 2015.

Buchan, William. *Advice to Mothers, on the Subject of their own Health, and on the Means of Promoting the Health, Strength, and Beauty of their Offspring*. Boston, MA: Joseph Bumstead, 1809. *Early American Imprints, Series 2*. Web. 1 September 2014.

Crazy Horse, Chief Roy. "The Pocahontas Myth." *Rankokus Indian Reservation*. Powhatan Ranape Nation, 1995-2015. Web. 14 December 2015.

Custis, George Washington Parke. *Pocahontas: or, the Settlers of Virginia, a National Drama in Three Acts*. *American Drama 1714-1915*. ProQuest, LLC, 2000-2016. Web. 5 October 2014.

Dunlap, William. *Fontainville Abbey*. New York: David Longworth, 1807. *American Drama Full-Text Database*. Web. 27 Feb 2014.

---. *Blue Beard; or, Female Curiosity*. New York: David Longworth, 1811. *American Drama Full-Text Database*. Web. 27 Feb 2014.

---. *History of the American Theatre, and Anecdotes of the Principal Actors.* New York: B. Franklin, 1963. Print.

"Declaration of Independence, The." In *The United States Constitution and other American Documents.* New York, NY: Fall River P., 2009. Print.

Foster, George G. "Wall Street and the Merchants' Exchange." In *New York by Gas-light and Other Sketches*. Berkeley: U of CA P, [1856] 1990. *UC Press E-Book Collection, 1982-2004*. Web. 16 February 2014.

Hamilton, William T. "A Plea for the Liberal Education of Woman." New York: J. F. Trow, 1845. *Everyday Life and Women in America, c.1800-1920.* Web. 12 Feb 2014.

Jacobs, Harriet Ann. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself.* Ed. L. Maria Child. In *Slave Narratives*. New York: The Library of America, 2000. Print. 743-948.

Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Ed. William Peden. Chapel Hill, NC and London: U of North Carolina P, 1954. Print.

Kotzbue, Augustus von. *The Stranger*. Trans. Sargent Epes. *American Drama Full-Text Database*. Web. 1 April 2014.

"McVicker's Theatre." *Chicago Tribune (1860-1872)*. 23 March 1864. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. Web. 21 Feb 2014.

Maturin, Charles R. *Bertram; or. The Castle of St. Aldobrand.* New York: David Longworth. *American Drama Full-Text Database*. Web. 1 April 2014.

"Multiple News Items." *The Liberator* 21 (22 May 1857): n.p. Accessible Archives. Accessible Archives, Inc., 2016. Web. 7 April 2016.

O'Sullivan, J. L. and O. C. Gardiner. "Annexation." *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17.85 (July-Aug 1845). Web. *Making of America*. 20 Nov 2015.

Owen, Robert Dale. *Pocahontas.* In *The Romantic Indian: Sentimental Views from Nineteenth Century American Literature, Volume Two.* Ed. by Charles Lombard. Delmar, NY: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1981. Print.

"Report of the Women's Rights Convention." *The North Star* (Aug 1848). *National Park Service*. N.p. Web. 20 April 2016.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile, or On Education.* Trans. A. Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1979. Print.

---. *The Social Contract, and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Mankind.* NY: Washington Square P, 1967. Print.

Rush, Benjamin. "Thoughts upon Female Education, Accommodated to the Present State of Society, Manners and Government in the United States of America." Boston, 1787. In *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*. Ed. Rudolph Frederick. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1965. *ACLS Humanities E-Book.* Web. 25 Oct 2015.

Smith, Captain John. *The Generall Historie of Virginia, England, and the Summer Isles*. *Early English Books Online.* London, 1624. Text Creation Partnership, n.d. Web. 10 Nov 2015.

Smith, William Henry. *The Drunkard: or, The Fallen Saved*. In *Early American Drama.* Ed. by Jeffrey H. Richards. NY: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. 248-303

---. Letter to Queen Anne. 1616. *Digital History*. Digital History, 2104. Web. 4 Dec 2015.

---. *The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia*. Oxford, 1612. *Early English Books Online*. Text Creation Partnership, n.d. Web. 10 Nov 2015.

Stokes, John J. *The Forest of Rosenwald*. New York: E. Murden, 1821. *American Drama Full-Text Database.* Web. 27 Feb 2014.

Strachey, William. *The History of and Travels in Virginia by William Strachey, Secretary of State.* London, 1620. *Empire Online*. Adam Matthew Digital, 2016. Web. 10 Nov 2015

Thoreau, Henry David. "Walden" in *Walden, and On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*. *Project Gutenberg.* N.p., 2016. Web. 1 March 2016.

Turnbull, John. *The Wood Daemon: or, The Clock has Struck!* Boston, 1808. *American Drama Full-Text Database*. Web. 27 Feb 2014.

Tyler, Royall. *The Contrast. In Early American Drama.* Ed. by Jeffrey H. Richards. NY: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. 1-57.

Van Evrie, John H. "Introduction." In *The Dred Scott Decision* by Roger Brooke Taney. New York, 1860. *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. N.p. 2009-2016. Web. 3 March 2016.

Wells Brown, William. *The Escape: or, Leap for Freedom.* In *The Norton Anthology of American Drama Volume Two.* Ed. J. Ellen Gainor, Stanton B. Garner, Jr., and Martin Puchner. NY and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2009. Print. 116-152.

---. "Remarks at the New England Colored Citizens' Convention." *The Liberator* 33 (9 Aug 1859): 132. *Accessible Archives.* Accessible Archives, Inc., 2016. Web. 7 April 2016.

Secondary Sources

"American Antimiscegenation." University of Idaho. Web. 5 March 2016.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1983. Print.

Anthony, Susan M. *Gothic Plays and American Society, 1794-1830*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co. Publishers, 2008. Print.

Bank, Rosemarie K. *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860.* New York, NY: Cambridge U P, 1997. Print.

Barker-Benfield, G. J. *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America.* New York and London: Routledge, 2000. Print.

---. "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth-century View of Sexuality." In *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective.* 2nd edition. Ed. Michael Gordon. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978. Print. 374-402.

Beabout, Gregory R. *Freedom and its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette UP, 1996. Print.

Berlant, Lauren. "Cruel Optimism." *Differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 17.3 (2006). *JSTOR*. Web. 23 May 2015.

---. "Poor Eliza." *American Literature* 70.3 (Sep 1998): 635-668. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 March 2016.

Bhaba, Homi. *Nation and Narration*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Blevins Faery, Rebecca. *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race, and Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation*. Norman, OK: U of OK P, 1993. Print.

Bolger, Eilleen. "Background History of the United States Naturalization Process." *The Social Welfare History Project*. Web. 29 April 2016.

Brooks, Daphne A. *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910.* Durham and London: Duke UP, 2006. Print.

Butsch, Richard. "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences." *American Quarterly* 46.3 (Sep 1999): 374-405. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Feb 2013.

Carlisle, Marcia. "Disorderly City, Disorderly Women: Prostitution in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 110.4 (October 1986): 549-568. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 May 2013.

Connelly, Frances S. *The Grotesque in Western Art and Culture: The Image at Play*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. Print.

Castiglia, Christopher. *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States.* Durham and London: Duke U P, 2008. Print.

Cima, Gay Gibson. *Performing Anti-Slavery: Activist Women on Antebellum Stages*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2014. *EBL*. Web.

"Doctrine of Discovery, 1492, the." *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2009-2016. Web. 5 Nov 2015.

"Dred Scott Decision, the: a Bitter Legacy." *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2009-2016. Web. 1 March 2106.

Dudden. Faye E. *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences 1790-1870*. New Haven CT and London: Yale U P, 1994. Print.

Feller, Daniel. "Andrew, Jackson." In *The Encyclopedia of American Political History.* Washington D.C.: CQ P, 2001. Print. 201-204

Foster, Susan Leigh. "An Introduction to Moving Bodies." In *Choreographing History.* Ed. Susan Leigh Foster. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: IN U P, 1995. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. Print.

---. "Theatricum Philosophicum." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault.* Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell U P, 1977. Print. 165-198.

---. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.

---. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Katie Soper. New York: Vintage Books, 1980. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety.* Trans. Alex Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1936. Print.

"Fugitive Slave Act, the." *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2009-2016. Web. 1 March 2016.

Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety.* New York and London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Garner, Stanton B. "William Wells Brown." In *The Norton Anthology of American Drama Volume Two.* Ed. J. Ellen Gainor, Stanton B. Garner, Jr., and Martin Puchner. NY and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2009. Print. 116-120.

Garrison, Tim Alan. "Indian Policy." In *The Encyclopedia of American Political History*. Washington D.C.: CQ P, 2001. Print. 188-191.

Gilman, Sander L., Elaine Showalter, G. S. Rousseau, Roy Porter. Hysteria beyond Freud. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of CA P, 1993. Print.

Gilmore, Paul. "'De Genewine Artekil': William Wells Brown, Blackface Minstrelsy, and Abolition." *American Literature* 69.4 (Dec 1997) 743-780. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 March 2016.

Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations.* Minneapolis, MN and London: U of MN P, 2013. Print.

Greenberg, Amy S. *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge U P 2005. Print.

Greene, Rayna. "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture." *The Massachusetts Review* 16.4 (Summer 1975). *JSTOR*. Web. 23 Feb 2015.

Grimsted, David. *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theatre and Culture 1800-1850*. Berkeley, CA and London: University of CA P, 1987 [1968]. Print.

Hammonds, Evelynn. "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematics of Silence." In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. NY and London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

"Harper's Ferry." *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2009-2016. Web. 1 May 2016.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-century America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.

Heidler, David S. and Jean Heidler. *Daily Life in the Early American Republic, 1790-1820: Creating a New Nation*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2004. *ABC-CLIO Collection*. Web. 10 March 2014.

hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981. Print.

---. *Black Looks: Race and Representation.* Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992. Print.

Hughes, Amy E. *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America.* Ann Arbor, MI: The U of MI P, 2012. Print.

Hume, Robert D. "Revaluation of the Gothic Novel." *PMLA* 84.2 (March 1969): 282-290. *JSTOR* . Web. 14 May 2013.

James, Kent. "Rioting." In *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*. Ed. David R. Goldfield. *SAGE Knowledge.* Sage Publications. Web. 27 April 2016.

Johansen, Bruce E. and Donald A. Grinde, Jr. "Pocahontas." In *The Encyclopedia of Native American Biography: Six Hundred Life Stories of Important People, from Powhatan to Wilma Mankiller*. NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1997. Print. 294-295.

"Johnson vs. M'Intosh." *American Eras*. Encyclopedia.com, 1997. Web. 5 Dec 2015.

Jones, Eugene H. *Native Americans as Shown on the Stage, 1753-1916.* Metuchen, NJ and London: The Scarecrow P, Inc., 1988. Print.

Jones, Jr., Douglas A. *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination and the Antebellum North.* Ann Arbor, MI: The U of MI P, 2014. Print.

Jortner, Adam. "The Empty Continent: Cartography, Pedagogy, and American History." In *Why you can't Teach United States History with American Indians*. *ProQuest Ebrary*. Web. 29 Nov 2015. 71-86.

Kaplan, Amy. "Manifest Domesticity." In *No More Separate Spheres!: A Next Wave American Studies Reader.* Ed. by Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamy Hatcher. Durham, NC and London: Duke U P, 2002. Print. 183-207.

Kaplan, Sidney. "The Octoroon: Early History of the Drama of Miscegenation." *The Journal of Negro Education* 20.4 (Fall 1951): 547-557. *JSTOR*. Web. 11 April 2016.

Kierkegaard, Soren. *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*. Trans. Albert B. Anderson. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U P, 1980. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. NY: Columbia U P, 1982. Print.

Kubiak, Anthony. *Agitated States: Performance in the American Theater of Cruelty*. Ann Arbor, MI: The U of Michigan P, 2005. Print.

Kukla, Rebecca. *Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture, and Mothers' Bodies.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005. Print. 3-101.

Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." In *The Blackwell Reader in Contemporary Social Theory.* Maldan, MA: Blackwell, 1999. Print.

Lombard, Charles. Introduction. *In The Romantic Indian: Sentimental Views from Nineteenth Century American Literature, Volume Two*. Ed. by Charles Lombard. Delmar, NY: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1981. Print. v-x.

Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class.* New York: Oxford UP, 2013 [1993]. Print.

Maines, Rachel P. *The Technology of the Orgasm: 'Hysteria,' the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins U P, 1999. Print.

Mason, Jeffrey D. "The Politics of Metamora." In *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics*. Ed. by Sue-Ellen Case and Janette Reinelt. Iowa City, IA: U of IA P, 1992. Print. *Studies in Theatre History and Culture*. Ed. Thomas Postlewaite. 92-110.

McConachie, Bruce A. *Melodramatic Transformations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870*. Iowa City, IA: U of Iowa P, 1992. Print.

McDougall, Walter A. *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era, 1829-1877*. New York, NY: Harper Publishers, 2008. Print.

Meer, Sarah. *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s*. Athens, GA and London: The U of Georgia P, 2005. Print.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 11th ed. 2009. Print.

Merriam-Webster's Medical Desk Dictionary. 2005. Print.

Merrill, Lisa. "'Most Fitting Companions': Making Mixed-Race Bodies Visible in Antebellum Public Spaces." *Theatre Survey* 56.2 (May 2015): 138-165. Print.

Micale, Mark. *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness.* London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008. Print.

Miller, Robert J. "The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny, and American Indians." In *Why you Can't Teach United States History without American Indians. ProQuest Ebrary*. Web. 29 Nov. 2015. 87-100.

Miller, Tice L. *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.* Carbondale, IL: Southern IL U P, 2007. Print. *Theater in the Americas*. Ed. Robert A. Schanke.

Montrose, Louis. “The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery.” *The New World*. Spec. issue of *Representations* 33 (Winter 1991): 1-41.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1992. Print.

Murphy, Bernice M. *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Cultures: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness.* NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

Nathans, Heather S. *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787-1861: Lifting the Veil of Black*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge U P, 2009. Print. Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama. Ed. Don B. Wilmeth.

“Noble Savage.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 2006. Web. 12 January 2016.

O'Donnell III, James H. "Pocahontas." in *Native American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*. Ed. Gretchen M. Bataile. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993. Print. 206-207.

Parrinder, Patrick. “Entering Dystopia, Entering ‘Erewhon.’” *Representations of Dystopia in Literature and Film.* Spec. issue of *Critical Survey* 17.1 (2005): 6-21. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 April 2016.

Pearsall, Sarah M. "Recentering Indian Women in the American Revolution." in *Why you Can't Teach United States History without American Indians*. Web. ProQuest Ebrary. 29 Nov 2015. 57-70

Porter, Roy. “The Body and the Mind, the Doctor and the Patient: Negotiating Hysteria.” *In Hysteria beyond Freud*. Gilman, et al. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of CA P, 1993. Print. 225-285.

Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. NY and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. Print.

Price, Barton. “Great Awakening(s).” In *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*. Ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010. Web. 19 April 2016.

Quinn, Arthur Hobson. Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *History of the American Drama, from the Beginning to the Civil War.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1917. *North American Theatre Online*. Web. 11 Nov 2015.

Richards, Jeffrey H. “The Octoroon (1859).” In *Early American Drama*. Ed. Jeffrey H. Richards. New York and London: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. 444-448.

Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996. Print.

Robinson, Cedric. *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regime of Culture in American Theater and Film before World War II.* Chapel Hill, NC: U of NC P, 2007. Print.

Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London and New York: Verso, 2007 [1991]. Print.

Ryan, Mary P. *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 183-1860*. New York: The Hayworth P, 1982. Print.

Rubin, Gayle. *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke U P, 2013. Print.

Salecl, Renata. *On Anxiety*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, CA: U of CA P, 1990. Print.

Shapiro, Laurie Gwen. “Pocahontas: Fantasy and Reality: Why so Many People Still need the Indian Princess.” *Slate* 22 June 2014. Web. 23 Nov 2015.

Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture*, 1830-1980. New York: Penguin Books, 1987. Print.

---. *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture*. New York: Columbia U P, 1997. Print.

Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. “Beauty, the Beast and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America.” *American Quarterly* 24.3 (Oct 1971): 562-584. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 February 2014.

Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll and Charles Rosenberg. “The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and her Role in Nineteenth-Century America.” *The Journal of American History* 60.2 (Sept. 1973): 332-356. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 July 2014.

Sonnenborn, Liz. “Pocahontas.” In *A to Z of Native American Women*. NY: Facts on File, 1998. Print. 134-152.

Spillers, Hortense. “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.” In *Feminisms Redux: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Robyn Warhol-Down and Diane Price Herndl. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers U P, 2009. Print. 443-464.

Tarnas, Richard. *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding Ideas that Have Shaped our World View*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991. Print.

Tilton, Robert S. *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative.* NY: Cambridge U P, 1994. Print.

Tomkins, Silvan. *Shame and its Sisters.* Ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank. Durham NC and London: Duke U P, 1995. Print.

Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: NY U P, 2012, Print.

Ussher, Jane M. *Managing the Monstrous Feminine: Regulating the Reproductive Body*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006. Print. *Women and Psychology.*

Wald, Priscilla. *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form*. Durham, NC and London: Duke U P, 1995. Print.

Welter, Barbara. “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860.” In *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective*. 2nd edition. Ed. Michael Gordon. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978. Print. 313-333.

---. *Dimity Convictions*. Athens, OH: Ohio U P, 1976. Print.

Wilmer, S. E. *Theatre, Society, and the Nation: Staging American Identities*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2002. Print.