Producing Memories: Staging the Civil War in US Culture, 1867-1908

by

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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Adviser: Distinguished Professor Judith Milhous

In this dissertation I examine the competing narratives of Civil War memories on stage, considering how race, ethnicity, gender, class, and history were performed. I argue that the memories audiences consumed via these performances influenced popular mental conceptions and – by extension – participated in the cyclical formation of juridical policy and social practice, ultimately revealing the unstable constructions of citizenship and the instability of the nation itself.

I use three broad strains of memories to interrogate the instability and political dynamics in theatrical stagings of War memories, broadly construed. I frame these stagings as "sites of memory," as places where politics and power are invested via production and consumption. The first strain of memories includes plays set during the war itself, including Grand Army of the Republic amateur dramas and commercial melodramas throughout the late nineteenth century. Because of the very structure of melodrama and the commercial demands of increasingly industrialized practices, even the "bloody shirt" rhetoric of the Union veterans morphs into a white reconciliationist vision of memories, excluding women and ethnic and racial Others. The second strain of memories includes African American performances of slavery and emancipation: black minstrelsy, plantation spectacles, and a handful of melodramas that grappled with broader questions of remembering slavery within the black community. These sites provided opportunities for black performers to establish careers, create a community/network, and – at times – celebrate emancipation, but the producers and performers also had to cater to white audience expectations. Ultimately, black-generated sites of

memories in practice predominantly adhered to Booker T. Washington's model of progress via professionalization. My analysis then shifts to plays set in the post-war South – with special attention to plays including the Ku Klux Klan – and interrogates the romanticizing of the crumbling and ruined Southern landscape within the broader aims of the Lost Cause movement. The nostalgia and yearning for the "lost" planter class ultimately valorizes the Confederate cause through the workings of melodrama and the spectacle of Southern landscapes. Throughout the analysis of these sites of memories, I am constantly asking how the consumption of these memories might have influenced juridical realities.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Setting the Stage: Visions of Civil War Memories

Responding to the "seething hell" of the US Civil War, Walt Whitman famously wrote that "the real war will never get in the books."[1] The Civil War and Reconstruction era inspired many attempts to express the inexpressible, and interpretations of the war and its aftermath varied among classes, regions, and races. Indeed, the Civil War's overall importance in US culture cannot be disputed. The war's remains have provided material for countless popular endeavors: novels, memorials, poems, reenactments, hobbies, tourist attractions, films, documentaries, plays, and other commercial products – lending credence to Gertrude Stein's claim that "after all there never will be anything more interesting than that Civil War never."[2] The sesquicentennial events that are currently being celebrated are a further testament to the enduring legacy of the Civil War in the United States. Editorials on the war's "meaning" are still published and commemorative events continue to be held, with Americans still trying to suck the marrow of the "real war" from its 150-year-old bones.

This consuming (and consumptive) quest for the "real war" is of course futile; and, as many will concede, the search for the "real" or "authentic" is particularly pointless when discussing the fickle construction of memory. David Glassberg neatly makes the distinction between the "real" history of an event, the "interpretation of history" as pursued by "professional historians," and the "sense of history" which "reflects the intersection of the intimate and the historical."[3] This sense of history gives people a "place…of locatedness and belonging" that is

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[1] Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days and Collect* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 80.
[2] Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937; rpt. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1971), 247. Scholars like Alice Fahs and Steven Conn – among others – have argued that the war did not produce significant "canonical" pieces, but there certainly was an outpouring of popular artworks. See Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North & South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Steven Conn, "Narrative Trauma and Civil War History Painting, or Why Are These Pictures So Terrible?" *History and Theory* 41 (December 2002): 17-42.
[3] David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 6.

crucial in the construction of group identities, both small and large.[4] It is this search for a collective's shared history that has consumed many scholars of Civil War memory, tracking the construction of various memories amongst different factions.

Memory studies as a method of exploring this "sense of history" has come to the fore in recent scholarship. The work of Maurice Hawlbachs, Pierre Nora, and (to a lesser extent) Paul Ricœur and Paul Connerton are often cited as some of the seminal figures in this field, with increasingly transdisciplinary attempts to utilize memory as a way of tackling disparate objects of study. Even with the huge amount of scholarship – much of it very impressive – that has been devoted to memory studies in regard to the Civil War and its legacy in US culture, little attention has been given to theatrical performance.[5] With the overwhelming interest that the Civil War has attracted in various areas of scholarship, why is it necessary to bring theatre into the fray? More specifically, what can theatre tell us about Civil War memories that other genres/forms *cannot*?

Theatre offers unique insight into the development of Civil War memories within popular culture during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. The United States during this time period underwent seismic transformations. Popular culture – by which I mean an awareness of a shared "common culture" as suggested by Raymond Williams and Michael Kammen's characterization of popular culture as a "participatory" and geographically distinct use of leisure time – was growing increasingly mobile in its methods of distribution, and thus was increasingly available to a wide range of Americans.[6] From the explosive growth in many sectors during the

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[4] Ibid, 7.

[5] There are many books and articles on the subject of Civil War memory. Michael Vorgenberg points out that memory studies have been "invaded in the last decade or so by American historians…the history of memory has become not merely a cottage industry but a boom trade, and the history of Civil War memory is the cash cow of the business." See Michael Vorenberg, "Recovered Memory of the Civil War," *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 4 (December 2001): 551. I will focus on the main book-length studies in this field, though the list of available major sources will dwindle as I interrogate Civil War memory in conjunction with theatre studies.

[6] See Kammen's discussion of the various definitions of popular culture, including Williams, and his explanation of popular culture in 1885-1935 8, 70-71. Additionally, for practical purposes, when I refer to "Americans," I am referring to inhabitants of the United States. I realize that this word can be contested as

Gilded Age to the widespread reforms of the Progressive Era, popular culture took on new and "more commercialized and technologically transformed" structures.[7] I would argue that as theatre grew increasingly commercial, with touring companies utilizing technological improvements (such as the railroad) and existing corporate business models, theatre was mixing both elements of popular culture and proto-mass culture in this era, as defined by Michael Kammen. Kammen makes the distinction between popular culture as – "*not always but more often than not*…participatory and interactive," while mass culture "*more often than not* induced passivity and the privatization of culture."[8] "Proto-mass culture," as Kammen names and defines it, begins with the "appearance of newspaper and then radio syndication (ca.1908-38)." It is worth noting that touring companies eliminated the need for stock companies in the 1870s, and the Theatrical Syndicate dominated the market by the 1890s – giving way to other various powerful theatre organizations in the early twentieth century.[9] There are, of course, exceptions to this system as productions did indeed take place outside the Syndicate circuits, particularly amateur or ethnic performances catering to geographically- and ethnically-restricted groups, but by and large the touring theatre created what Thomas Postlewait has described as a developing "national culture of shared experiences" in the Gilded Age.[10] While this "national culture" was far from set in the late nineteenth century, theatre production monopolies attempted to cater to the largest possible national audience.

The theatrical growth from local to national informed not only the economic structures of performance culture in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, but also the content of the performances. A need for national continuity created a performance culture that displays

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reinforcing the North/South divide and ideas about US exceptionalism, but I feel that there is no other word in common usage that adequately designates this group.

[7] Kammen, *American Culture*, 6.

[8] Kammen, *American Tastes,* 22, emphasis in original.

[9] See John Frick, "A Changing Theatre: New York and Beyond," in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume Two: 1870-1945,* eds. Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 196-218.

[10] Thomas Postlewait, "The Hieroglyphic Stage: American Theatre and Society, Post-Civil War to 1945," in *Cambridge History of American Theatre*, 2: 158.

features of both popular culture and proto-mass culture: audiences could be interactive and attend these various performances, but the syndicated and corporatized structures guaranteed that the different audiences were very often experiencing the same touring production. A nationalized performance-attending culture was being established and normalized around the turn of the century. Thus, theatre – as a form of popular, proto-mass culture – can give us a glimpse into what increasingly large sectors of the theatre-going population were *seeing* and *experiencing* when they attended a play, and what kinds of memories of the Civil War they were encouraged to embrace or disavow, in turn.

A quick account of two theatrical productions widely separated in time will begin to tease out some of the latent political implications in performances of Civil War memory. In 1879, former president and Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant attended a production of *The Color Guard* mounted in his honor at the California Theatre in San Francisco. The play was written by Colonel A. R. Calhoun, a Civil War veteran and the commander of the Pennsylvania branch of the veterans' association the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) in the early 1870s.[11] General Grant watched "three full companies of the National Guard" in this "military spectacle,"[12] which by and large portrayed a reunion narrative with a vague anti-slavery sentiment. The play follows the travails of the Yankee hero, his Ohio sweetheart, and the villain, who is a cowardly, hyper-sexual, "immoral" Northerner who defected to the South in order to kill his romantic competition.[13] The Confederate soldiers in this play are to be pitied, having been duped by the men of "book larnin'" like the villain, who recruits the simple Southern farmers and woodsmen with a "tongue…as smooth as ice an' as dangerous," according to one pro-Union Southerner.[14] The blame for causing the Civil War in *The Color Guard* does not lie with the common Southern man, but falls instead upon a small group of anti-democratic elites of both Northern and

[11] A. R. Calhoun, *The Color Guard* (Providence: Millard, Gray & Simpson, Steam Printers, 1872).
[12] "Honoring General Grant," *New York Times*, September 24, 1879, 1.
[13] This is a rather broad way of describing the play, as the plot covers nearly five years, travels all over the Union and Confederacy, and has at least thirty-three speaking parts (plus various other supernumeraries).
[14] Calhoun, *The Color Guard*, 17.

Southern extraction. General Grant witnessed a production where the common soldier on either side of the war was ennobled, setting the stage for the reunion narrative that would dominate popular theatre by the century's close.

Almost forty years later, President Woodrow Wilson – the first Southerner elected to the White House since the Civil War and the son of a man who had served as a chaplain in the Confederate army – enjoyed a private screening at the White House of *The Birth of a Nation,* D. W. Griffith's 1915 film based on Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s novels and stage play *The Clansman* (1905).[15] Dixon had declared during a third act curtain call at the premiere in Norfolk, Virginia, that his play was a "sequel" to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, claiming that his object was to "teach the north, the young north, what it has never known—the awful suffering of the white man during the dreadful reconstruction period."[16] D. W. Griffith's film perpetuated and projected onto movie screens nationwide Dixon's white supremacist version of the post-Civil War South's history, as hooded Klansmen (many of whom were ex-Confederate soldiers) charged through the Southern landscape to save white women from black male predators (played by white actors in blackface). After the viewing of the movie, President Wilson supposedly declared that it was "like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true."[17]

Using these presidentially sanctioned viewings as chronological bookends, this study will explore the symbolic capital and political power invested in performances of Civil War memory. The presidential endorsements of these two drastically disparate interpretations of the Civil War – in terms of its causes, "meaning," and lasting effects – reveal the protracted cultural and political battle over memories of the war. There are real juridical and social implications embedded in these instances of inter-generational presidential spectating.

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[15] Thomas Dixon, Jr., *The Clansman* (unpublished typescript). 1905. D.W. Griffith Papers, New York: Museum of Modern Art.
[16] "'The Clansman' Scored Sensational Success," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 23, 1905.
[17] Melvyn Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation": A History of "The Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111. The film was screened for Wilson on February 18, 1915.

My dissertation explores the battle to represent the "real" Civil War, as it was fought on the late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century US stage. I argue that theatre is an especially apt medium for exploring the memories of the Civil War and its aftermath in US culture – falling within the time period that Michael Kammen has called the "heyday of commercialized popular culture in the United States," and an era which also witnessed the increasing mass production of Civil War memories.[18] I further argue that the dramatized manipulations of Civil War memories in the late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century United States are embodied investments in the war's "meaning(s)." By creating and representing these memories with performing bodies, there are multiple forms of labor invested into these productions. The productions are not only attempts to endow a "vision" of memory with value and claim a certain group's "sense of history," but these performances also reveal a variety of anxious responses to an increasingly industrialized and immigrant nation, bristling with conflicted definitions of citizenship. Furthermore, they staged debates over what constituted an "ideal" US citizen in terms of race, ethnicity, class, and gender, displaying inclusionary and exclusionary tactics and establishing hierarchies by marking characters and bodies as "un/worthy" of participating within the nation's past and present. The purported ability to decode and bestow (or deny) rights to bodies reveals the unstable constructions of gender, race, class, and ethnicity, while also exposing the constructedness of juridical status, legal rights to citizenship, and – by extension – the imaginary state of the union.[19]

I will capture the sense of process and co-evolutionary moments within the dialectic of Civil War memory, encompassing the contradictions and veiling mediations, the struggles to assign value, and attempts to establish power through staging various visions of history. To this end, I will holistically probe the many theatrical visions of the Civil War as sites of memory

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[18] Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1999), 21. Kammen identifies 1885 to 1935 as this "heyday," and theatre is clearly an important part of this "commercialized popular culture."

[19] This reference to the "imagined" nation is of course a reference to Benedict Anderson's work. See *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).

invested with political power and social capital, examining performances that might at times exhibit blind spots, affinities, and projections of utopian nations. By "holistically probing" these memories, I mean that I will look at productions set before, during, and after the war – considering the spectrum of interpretations of the war, rather than simply focusing on one cohesive strand of memory or one discreet set of similar productions. I will situate these productions within a larger contextual landscape of theatre history and their economic, social, and juridical moments in US history. The work of Civil War historians and theorists of sociology of culture, cultural studies, cultural memory, race, and ethnicity will be used to interrogate theatrical productions of Civil War memory.

Before delving too deeply into my argument and my theoretical framework in this introductory chapter, I will both define and question the typologies around which I will structure my study. Furthermore, I will clarify how these major strains of Civil War memory need to be examined alongside one another to expose the political stakes that are entrenched in representations of the Civil War in US culture, and I review the literature on Civil War memory studies to define these visions. I also survey the existing studies on Civil War-related theatre in order to establish that there is indeed a lack of scholarship approaching war memory on stage in a holistic way. After showing the need for further work in this area, I argue that by using performance of Civil War memories as a new lens of study we can begin to think of these productions as sites of memory invested in and mediated by relations of power, class, and race and ethnicity; as places where the definition of citizenship, and by extension of the nation, were contested, contradicted, or buttressed within the diverging visions of history.

Civil War Memory Studies: Holistic Visions

There is a risk associated with following too closely any one typology or category in pursuing an argument: there will invariably be overlap, discrepancies, and contradictions, especially when dealing with the fickle construction of memory. Michael Kammen claims that

the dynamic and political nature of memory cannot be denied, but he also cautions against "taking for granted the cohesion, clarity, and retentiveness of either civic or popular memory," since "both can be sorely truncated or blurred." [20] In many ways, this "blurring" of memories is exactly what I wish to pursue within this dissertation. Extending this visual metaphor, I wish to cluster my work around three "visions" of Civil War memory that David Blight establishes: the "reconciliationist vision," growing out of the burial of the dead and the desire for closure, the "white supremacist vision," or the Lost Cause/Confederate vision that eliminated slavery from the war's causes and asserted white fraternal hegemony, and the "emancipationist" vision of the African American experience – with the reconciliationist and the white supremacist vision eventually combining.[21] In the reconciliationist vision Blight locates the "superstructure of Civil War memory, but its base was white supremacy in both its moderate and virulent forms."[22] Blight's tripartite view of Civil War memory will be critical to my dissertation, as I will test both the uses and limits of these typologies in staged performances of Civil War memories.

Part of my interest in pursuing the conflicts, interrelations, and evolutions among these three strands of memory is to keep in mind Stuart McConnell's call towards "thinking holistically about Civil War memory."[23] He cautions against studies that "avoid the analytic forest to tend to the monographic trees," ignoring the "sprawling democracy of versions."[24] This is not to say, of course, that within each "version" or "vision," one will be unable to find contradictions. This is where vision becomes an apt metaphor for describing different versions of historical memory: all visions (like memories) can be blurred or suffer from blind spots, elisions, or imperfections. Of course, when one starts to explore the popular aspects of Civil War memory is just when this blurring becomes apparent. Not every performance that I examine will

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[20] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 9.
[21] David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2.
[22] Ibid., 361.
[23] Stuart McConnell, "Epilogue: The Geography of Memory," in *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture,* Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 259.
[24] Ibid., 265.

neatly conform to a proposed vision, and I am particularly interested in productions which fail to fully exhibit flawless 20/20 vision, since these conflicted senses of the war's history reveal the likewise-conflicted construction of citizenship. The very choice of the word "vision" is prominent in the decoding of performances, both for the ontological decoding that theatre demands as well as the double-decoding that occurs when human bodies are read by others.

Some Civil War scholars would perhaps take issue with my collapse of the Union version of the war's events and the reconciliationist vision. Gary Gallagher, for example, makes a distinction between the Union Cause, the Lost Cause, the Emancipation Cause, and the Reconciliation Cause.[25] Gallagher concedes that there is overlap between the versions, but believes that each is a "distinct attempt to explain and understand the war."[26] Blight is a bit more equivocal in asserting the combination of the reconciliationist and the white supremacist vision, claiming that they "locked arms" and "delivered the country a segregated memory of its Civil War on Southern terms."[27] Of course, Gallagher's distinction allows for a more nuanced understanding of the detractors from the reconciliationist cause within the Union camp (and there were many). However, for the purposes of my study, the productions I will interrogate mostly display a muddled Blue-Gray reconciliationist vision that embraces the heroic attributes of the common soldier on both sides. As the theatre productions concerning Civil War memories were increasingly mass produced, so the themes of reconciliation replaced sectionalist loyalties.

Though McConnell warns against the "monographic trees," there have been vast amounts of scholarship speaking to each of these visions and shaping the field of Civil War studies. These studies can help support a holistic inquiry into the performance of various memory visions. Michael Kammen's 1991 study *Mystic Chords of Memory* – which as Matthew Grow argues is "itself an important impetus for American scholars to study the historical

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[25] Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Blight, *Race and Reunion,* 2.

construction of memory" – examines the reconciliationist vision.[28] Kammen claims that there was a "blurring of specific historical memories into mythical sagas that were at least partially spurious" going hand-in-hand with the reconciliationist narrative.[29] Nina Silber provides a gendered context of the reconciliationist vision that explores intersectional gender relationships and the emasculation of the Confederate male within the Northern process of reconciliation.[30] Amongst the wide range of cultural performances and sources that Silber draws upon, she also mentions popular melodramas of the 1880s and 90s, deftly connecting the reunion narratives of popular New York stage melodramas with the sectionalist and party politics of late nineteenth-century America. In his study of statues and monuments that commemorated the soldiers and slaves of the Civil War, Kirk Savage argues that there was a real chance to create a new, united vision of America that included a variety of racial representations. Instead, Savage claims that these memorials ended up re-encoding racial stereotypes aesthetically, with a common white soldier emerging in the classical European tradition.[31] Joan Waugh's work on Ulysses S. Grant tracks the eventual "declining reputation" of Grant throughout the twentieth century, much of which she attributes to the dominance of the Lost Cause and reunion narrative in both popular culture and scholarship.[32] Waugh's book is an attempt to "correct the imbalance" within contemporary scholarly publications, which focus more often on the Confederate/Lost Cause identity than the Union cause.[33]

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[28] Matthew J. Grow, "The Shadow of the Civil War: A Historiography of Civil War Memory," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 79. Grow's article provides a comprehensive survey the field – including the early Pulitzer-prize winning history of Paul Buck in *Road to Reunion* and Robert Penn Warren – comparing the growth of various areas of study and the weaknesses within the field.
[29] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory,* 108.
[30] Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
[31] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[32] Joan Waugh, *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 303.
[33] There have been other books on Civil War memory beyond the studies I cite here, but many of them are quite focused geographically, or on individual generals or battles, such as Carol Reardon's *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997) or William Blair and William Pencak's edited volume *Making and Remaking Pennsylvania's Civil War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

And indeed, the "imbalance" that Waugh mentions hosts a lengthy list of Confederate studies. Notably in one of the foundational works within this field, Gaines Foster claims that the Lost Cause was not "backward-looking or romantic," nor was it a "revival of rabid sectionalism" by and large. Instead, Foster argues that the Lost Cause "preached and practiced sectional reconciliation" and "eased the region's passage through a particularly difficult period of social change."[34] Foster also asserts that the reconciliationist movement within the Lost Cause was not "from the ranks of the planter elite or even the leaders of the Confederacy but from the urban and town middle class and the rank and file of the army."[35] By situating the desire for reconciliation within the Lost Cause movement and the common white Southern citizen, Foster concretely provides the evidence that Blight will elaborate upon when he claims that the reconciliationist and Confederate movements "locked arms." Other studies exploring the Confederate vision have been undertaken by W. Fitzhugh Brundage, William A. Blair, Gary Gallagher, and Alan Nolan.[36] All these scholars, but particularly Gallagher and Nolan, highlight the commonalities in the Lost Cause vision: "ex-Confederates denied the importance of slavery in triggering secession, blamed sectional tensions on abolitionists, celebrated antebellum Southern slaveholding society, portrayed Confederates as united in waging their war for independence, extolled the gallantry of Confederate soldiers, and attributed Northern victory to sheer weight of numbers and resources."[37] Of course, the reconciliationist vision also discounted the role of slavery in the causes of the war – leaving only the emancipationist vision to contend with this oversight.

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[34] Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 6.
[35] Ibid.
[36] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, eds., *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
[37] Gallagher, "Introduction" in *Myth of the Lost Cause*, 4.

The inclusion of the emancipationist vision by Blight has, in turn, caused others to consider this previously neglected area.[38] Donald Shaffer's inquiry into the status and lives of African American veterans of the Civil War argues that inclusion in the Grand Army of the Republic was an important feature for black veterans to establish their masculinity and service to the nation while memorializing their participation in the war, providing a platform for juridical and social acceptance.[39] However he notes that black veterans were often considered "second-class members" within the organization, even though a few managed to achieve high positions within several posts.[40] Kathleen Clark has studied African American commemorations of Emancipation and Decoration Days throughout the fifty years following the Emancipation Proclamation. In her work, Clark argues that it is "difficult to locate a point of coherence" amongst the diverse celebrations and constituents.[41] Ultimately, even when coping with "profound disagreements amongst black southerners over the significance of the past," she says that the emancipationist visions "posed a vital challenge to prevailing white ideologies of history and progress."[42]

Even with a lack of "coherence" – which, indeed, each of the visions of Civil War history share at some point – it is equally important to see what other visions were challenged or corroborated in each performance of memory. It is necessary to not only notice the blind spots, blurring, or elisions within a particular vision, but to interrelate the typologies to help us, in effect, holistically see the forest rather than the trees. Within this "forest" with its "democracy of versions," popular culture – and, for the purposes of this study, theatre – perhaps best represents this "democracy" with its many voices and interests. Also, this holistic approach

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[38] Blight is building on prior work, but the attention devoted to black memories has been much less than the time given to white memories. The Freedmen and Southern Society Project began collecting stories of emancipation in 1976, followed shortly after by more recuperative work on emancipation by Leon Litwack (1979) and Eric Foner (1983). See Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*; Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom*.
[39] Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).
[40] Ibid., 158.
[41] Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913 (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 4.
[42] Ibid., 224.

means that I do not wish to confine myself to only looking at theatrical performances with a war-time setting alone: the war's perceived causes and effects are just as important as the war itself, and a holistic approach would need to encompass interpretations of slavery and the antebellum origins as well as the Reconstruction period. Both of these chronological periods and subject areas were integral to the construction of the emancipationist and the Lost Cause vision.

These visions of history are not fixed, but – much like the act of visually decoding – are processes: constantly deciphering and refocusing, with new elisions and blurs. Part of what the "culture as process" framework allows for is holistic viewing, noting these contradictions, various elements, and constant changes that occur as one constitutive element shifts.[43] It is necessary to review the prior work done on the Civil War in US theatre further to clarify where I intervene in this continuing conversation on memories and popular culture.

The Civil War and Studies in Theatre & Performance

The growing dominance of Civil War reunion dramas, which grew increasingly accomodationist and white supremacist, is part of the larger cultural trend: a process of healing, conciliation, and ultimately (and ironically) exclusion. Holistically examining the conflicting visions of Civil War history presented on stage demands a consideration of how various productions dealt with the causes, effects, and legacy of the war in American culture.

The work on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century performance and melodrama provides a backdrop for the theatrical activities I will focus on. Though several scholars have made headway into the study of theatre related to the Civil War (including its causes, aftermath, and pervasive ramifications), the existing studies have not approached the subject with either a holistic framework, nor have fully explored the implications of these productions within a rapidly changing culture. Of course, the field of American theatre study in the time period of my

[43] I am drawing on David Harvey's reading of Marx, along with the work of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu. I will be referencing these theorists at greater lengths below while establishing my theoretical framework. See in particular David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010).

focus has seemingly only recently been deemed worthy of serious and sustained inquiry. As Susan Harris Smith documents, American theatre has often been regarded as the "unwanted bastard child" in academia.[44] Despite several and notable recent attempts to remedy this oversight of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century performance, the extant studies do not adequately address the dynamics of Civil War memory in theatrical performance.[45]

Some of the earliest work in the field of American theatre was accomplished by Arthur Hobson Quinn and Richard Moody. Quinn's major survey focuses mostly on dramatists, as he seeks to write "an account of our drama and not of our theatre."[46] Even in this early twentieth-century study, packed with facts and very little analysis, Quinn notices – but does not at all interrogate, of course – what will become the trend in major commercial Civil War dramas when discussing Bronson Howard's *Shenandoah* (1889): "the balance of sympathy between the North and the South is artfully kept without in any way weakening the appeal of patriotism to a generation long enough removed from the Civil War to view it with interest as a theme for artistic treatment."[47] Quinn does, however, mention the popular GAR drama *The Color Guard*, and that General Grant attended a production. Richard Moody, in turn, notes that the Civil War was predominantly used as a background to various romance tales in popular melodramas after the war – such as Boucicault's *Belle Lamar* (1874) and Belasco's *May Blossom* (1884), and also points out that "the basic causes of the conflict were never hinted at" in these plays by and large.[48] Moody sees the plays as being primarily about the "conflict between loyalties to the

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[44] Susan Harris Smith, *American Drama: The Bastard Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.
[45] See Roger A. Hall, *Performing the American Frontier, 1870-1906* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Charlotte M. Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005); Kim Marra, *Strange Duets: Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1914* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), for example.
[46] Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama: From the Civil War to the Present Day* (1927; rpt. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1936), 2.
[47] Ibid., 58.
[48] Richard Moody, *America Takes the Stage: Romanticism in American Drama and Theatre, 1750-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 162.

North and South," with little regard to slavery or other larger political questions, but as both moving towards realism and maintaining romantic tones.[49]

Rosemary Cullen offers an informative glimpse into the field of theatre and Civil War memory, though this work serves more as a survey than an incisive analysis.[50] Cullen's study is not from an academic journal or a collected volume (though she has published in journals as well): rather, this archivist's essay accompanies a 1982 exhibition on Civil War drama from 1769 to 1900, including the representation of slavery on-stage within the broad parameters she has defined. She presents major plot points and themes, but minimal production information due to the nature of the work's function. The survey not only addresses the popular melodramas (e.g., Gillette's *Secret Service* or Boucicault's *Octoroon*), but also the largely-ignored Grand Army of the Republic theatrical materials. Cullen's exhibition essay, written decades ago, still stands as a call to theatre scholars. The Grand Army of the Republic was the most powerful and populous of the veterans' organizations of the Civil War, and its role in defining the memory of the Civil War – and the final victory of what David Blight calls the merger of the "white supremacist vision" with the "reconciliationist vision" over the "emancipationist vision" – was crucial to the forming of the Civil War's legacy in this country.[51] The tantalizing tidbits that Cullen unearthed from the archive are a starting point for further inquiry.

Studies on melodrama in American culture have given the most attention to Civil War dramas. In his influential work on the relationship of melodrama to ideology, class, and hegemony, Bruce McConachie notes that there was increasing "centralization of theatrical power" and the commodification of theatre after the war, but he makes no mention of drama related to the war after its end in 1865.[52] Interestingly, Jeffrey Mason does not cite Cullen at all in his study of melodrama, though his *Melodrama and Myth* was published a decade after

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[49] Ibid., 168.
[50] Rosemary L. Cullen, *The Civil War in American Drama Before 1900: Catalog of an Exhibition* (Providence: Brown University Library, 1982).
[51] Blight, *Race and Reunion,* 2.
[52] Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 256.

Cullen's exhibition.[53] Mason's larger project is to explore plays that establish "a construction of American experience, designed to reinforce the perspectives that were cherished by its creators and their potential audiences."[54] Linking constructions of myth, ideology, and sentimentalism, Mason posits that melodrama itself, while wildly popular, challenged American exceptionalism.[55] Mason spends a chapter looking at the GAR amateur dramas and connecting the major themes, characters, and structures in these plays to Bronson Howard's *Shenandoah* (1889). Mason does provide some excellent insights into the GAR dramas – and legitimates them as a source for study – but there are also omissions within his study. The most obvious are in terms of contextuality and in content. Gender, race, and ethnicity are never looked at as inter-dependent constructions in any of Mason's analyses, an approach that threatens to obscure the political dimensions and exclusionary potential of these dramatic narratives. Nina Silber does address some of the gendered nuances that Mason disregards in these plays, though she is doing so in the context of the overall "romantic and sentimental culture of conciliation," and theatre is not her main focus.[56] She considers the popular melodramas of the 80s and 90s (such as Gillette's *Held by the Enemy* or Bronson Howard's *Shenandoah*), examining the plays within the context of a reunionist vision that equated cross-sectional gendered romance with national reconciliation.[57]

Other general US theatre histories have touched upon the Civil War in various ways. Gary Richardson points out that the late nineteenth-century war dramas "belie in substantial

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[53] If he had consulted her extensive sources, he would not claim that plays like *The Color Guard* were lost. This is a claim that Moody also makes. Though Mason lists about twenty GAR plays, Rosemary Cullen documents anywhere from 30 to 40 extant texts that could potentially be plays explicitly marketed for the GAR. See also Rosemary Cullen, "A Checklist of American Civil War Drama: Beginnings to 1900," *Performing Arts Resources* 12 (1987): 135-155.

[54] Jeffrey Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 1.

[55] Ibid., 19.

[56] Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 2.

[57] There are other studies on melodrama and race, such as the work of Linda Williams and Susan Gillman, but as these works do not focus directly on the stage productions of Civil War memories that I am discussing here, I will visit them in later chapters but not include them in this survey. See Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White From Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Susan Gillman, *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

ways the stereotype of melodrama as a naïve drama whose orientation wholly neglects political or social commentary," but then goes on to argue that Howard's *Shenandoah* "completely ignores the massive trauma of the war itself." [58] In the other war melodramas he explores in the few pages devoted to the topic, Richardson only begins to draw out the complex gender and racial/ethnic dynamics of plays, and he does not mention the GAR dramas or any other appropriations of war history. In his study of the period, Tice Miller argues, in his discussion of William Gillette's *Held by the Enemy* (1886), that "the public was not ready to deal with the carnage of the war," so "battles and deaths are kept offstage."[59] In fact, popular GAR melodramas had been performed across the country which staged *both* battles and deaths (thought quite crudely and with little technical spectacle). Miller does note that Gillette's work was character-driven instead of focusing "upon the significant issues of the war," before proceeding to then endorse Mason's work on the "myth" of the Civil War in a few cogent sentences.[60]

Marc Robinson provides one of the most recent publications in this realm. He conducts an interdisciplinary exploration of late-nineteenth-century melodramas and aligns the fractured cultural outlook of the post-Civil War era with the inadequate melodramas of that time. Robinson then goes on to claim that Gillette was actively attempting to emulate the performative aesthetics of photographer/film pioneer Muybridge, without any evidence that Gillette was purposefully pursuing such aesthetic ends.[61] While Robinson makes some interesting artistic connections within a fractured post-war aesthetic, he is clearly not interested in contextualizing these plays within their moment of historical production, pointedly ignoring audience reception and the political ideologies in operation.

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[58] Gary A. Richardson, *American Drama From the Colonial Period Through World War I: A Critical History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 138.
[59] Tice L. Miller, *Entertaining the Nation; American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), 162.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Marc Robinson, "Staging the Civil War," in *The American Play, 1787- 2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Of the studies surveyed above, none gives sufficient attention to the Civil War on stage.[62] Another issue becomes clear, especially in light of McConnell's call for holistic memory viewing: there is little or no discussion in these theatre studies of African American histories of the war. Though general histories have laid the groundwork for commemorations and memorial events in the African American community, there have been limited forays into the depictions of the war rendered by those who ostensibly benefited most from the war's resulting freedom (however limited that freedom proved to be in the aftermath of Reconstruction and the establishment of Jim Crow segregation). In order to begin to discern the limits and traces of the emancipationist vision of Civil War history on stage, one must pull from widely disparate sources.

The studies undertaken on the Hyers Sisters are an excellent starting point for exploring the emancipationist vision within the timeline of African American theatre. Their productions of Joseph Bradford's *Out of Bondage* (1876) and Pauline Hopkins's *Peculiar Sam; or, The Underground Railroad* (1879) are some of the earliest constructions of post-war emancipationist histories on stage. [63] Other than works that simply give a reconstructive history of their career,[64] or more literature-oriented approaches that have focused mostly on the relationship of Pauline Hopkins's plays with minstrelsy,[65] their role in terms of performing black history has not been discussed at length. The initial work done on early African American musical theatre was partly a recuperative effort designed to reclaim the music, productions, and

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[62] There are many studies on slavery as depicted on the antebellum stage, but there is no comprehensive study of slavery on the post-war stage. For antebellum stagings, see Heather S. Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787-1861: Lifting the Veil of Black* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Melinda Lawson, "Imagining Slavery: Representations of the Peculiar Institution on the Northern Stage, 1776-1860," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 1 (March 2011): 25-55.

[63] Eileen Southern, ed., *African American Theater, Volume 9* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994).

[64] Errol Hill, "The Hyers Sisters: Pioneers in Black Musical Comedy," *The American Stage: Social and Economic Issues from the Colonial Period to the Present*, eds. Tice L. Miller and Ron Engle (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 115-130.

[65] See Martha Patterson, "Remaking the Minstrel: Pauline Hopkins's *Peculiar Sam* and the Post-Reconstruction Black Subject," in *Black Women Playwrights: Visions on the American Stage*, ed. Carol P. Marsh-Lockett (New York: Garland, 1999), 13-23; and Jessica Metzler, "'Course I Knows Dem Feet!': Minstrelsy and Subversion in Pauline E. Hopkins's *Slaves' Escape; or the Underground Railroad*," in *Loopholes and Retreats: African American Writers and the Nineteenth Century*, eds. John Cullen Gruesser and Hanna Wallinger (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2009), 101-123. Metzler discusses the possible production aspects and historical narratives at play in an earlier version of *Peculiar Sam*, but this version was only performed in Boston, while the later version toured throughout the country.

performers from the archives, where they had languished largely forgotten by theatre and music scholars. Thomas Riis, Eileen Southern, and Bernard Peterson were crucial to this effort, collecting texts, musical scores, and performers' biographies for easier scholarly access, but the in-depth analysis of particular productions is minimal (nor is it part of their projects).[66] David Krasner has more deeply probed the context and production conditions of early African American theatre, applying a Du Boisian double-consciousness lens where resistance could also have the "appearance of accommodation," situating his readings in a narrative of progress and racial uplift. [67] Bringing a more theoretical lens to early African American theatre while building on this notion of Du Boisian two-ness, Daphne Brooks theorizes the disruption of hierarchies of race, gender, and class via "Afro-alienation acts."[68] However, Brooks asserts there is a "sheer heterogeneity of black popular performance culture" in her time period of focus (namely, 1850 to 1910), a claim that I will expand on in light of the proliferation of the visions of history that appeared on stage.[69]

Barbara Webb has challenged the claims of authenticity situated in progressive uplift narratives promoted by David Krasner (and which Brooks also extends), proposing that these narratives limit the agency of African American performers by excluding works like *The South Before the War* (1892) or *Black America* (1895).[70] Instead, she argues that these claims of authenticity and identity are contingent and contextual, and that authenticating identity can still

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[66] Eileen Southern, ed., *African American Theater;* Thomas Riis, *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989); Bernard Peterson Jr., *The African American Theatre Directory, 1816-1960: A Comprehensive Guide to Early Black Theatre Organizations, Companies, Theatres, and Performing Groups* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997).
[67] David Krasner, *Resistance, Parody and Double-Consciousness in African American Theatre, 1895-1910* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 4.
[68] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910. (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.
[69] Ibid., 3.
[70] Barbara L. Webb, "Authentic Possibilities: Plantation Performance of the 1890s," *Theatre Journal* 56, no. 1 (March 2004): 63-82. Additionally, Webb makes a tantalizing reference to the inclusion of 9th Calvary veterans in the 1895 production of *Black America*, but Webb is interested predominantly in broader performances of African American historical identity rather than in pointedly addressing the war itself.

occur within commercialized performances catering to white audience expectations.[71] As some of the earliest post-bellum career opportunities for professional black performers were in minstrel troupes or in ethnographic displays such as the Dahomey village in the Chicago Exposition of 1893, it is important not to discount the racist trappings of these forms and also to consider the possibilities (however limited) that black performers could claim and expand upon in the future. Other early African American musicals that hearken back to the plantation have not been set within a framework of interrogating cultural memory, though there have been an increasing number of studies that situate the development of African American performers within the profession.[72] As with the discourse surrounding Civil War memories on stage in general, little attention has been devoted to interrogating the "sense of history" and emancipationist vision that is under construction throughout late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American theatre.

Though there are more mentions of the white supremacist vision of the war on the US stage, they are rather limited in scope as well. The existing scholarship on D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*—a topic which would seem to afford ample opportunity to explore earlier staged representations of the Lost Cause—rarely refers to Dixon's stage play. Cedric Robinson's recent *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, for instance, fails to examine the play in any depth.[73] Melvyn Stokes has rectified this deficit somewhat in his history of the film, but Stokes does not explore other Lost Cause productions (or Confederate popular culture depictions in general) from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[74] Anthony Slide likewise devotes a chapter to *The Clansman*, though he does so within the context of Dixon's entire career and does not

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[71] Ibid., 63-5.
[72] See Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi,,2002); Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged but Right: Black Traveling Shows, "Coon Songs," and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007); Paula Marie Seniors, *Beyond Lift Every Voice and Sing: The Culture of Uplift, Identity, and Politics in Black Musical Theater* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009).
[73] Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
[74] Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation."*

fully contextualize the play within a dramatic tradition of Lost Cause visions.[75] David Mayer has taken another and more fruitful approach for my study, examining Griffith's relationship with American theatre. Mayer draws upon Cullen and Mason for his source material (though he does not actually cite a single GAR play), and he mentions "Southern melodramas" that "highlighted the hypocritical wickedness of the abolitionists," but he does not name (in the text itself or the footnotes) what exactly these Southern melodramas are or when they were produced.[76] While he does outline the general trend towards reconciliation in the professional plays, Mayer is working in broad strokes here and tends to dismiss the plays that might detract from his generalizations. However, he does indeed give space to Dixon's stage play *The Clansman*, providing a short history of the play's production, content, and reviews.[77] Because he is documenting these plays in regard to Griffith's career rather than the trajectory of the Lost Cause in theatrical representations, Mayer does not entirely contextualize Dixon's play within the tradition of the unnamed "Southern melodramas" that he references. In fact, there is no published, comprehensive work devoted solely to the development of the Lost Cause vision on the dramatic stage.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this survey of Civil War memories in theatre and performance studies: studies tend, by and large, to focus on Northern—specifically New York City – professional stages, and there is a lack of contextualized and holistic viewing of the disparate visions of the war (particularly the white supremacist and emancipationist visions) and their competing senses of history. This dissertation seeks to redress this omission in the

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[75] Anthony Slide, *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

[76] David Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker: D.W. Griffith & The American Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 124. I assume that Mayer is referencing Dixon's *The Clansman*, but he does not cite another single Southern/Lost Cause-oriented title to back his generalization.

[77] It is unclear from which play text Mayer draws his summary. Though Mayer rightly notes that there were variant copies for the touring companies, he lists only four known extant scripts, claiming that "no others are known to exist" (263),when in fact a fifth copy resides in Griffith's papers at the Museum of Modern Art—the version the filmmaker presumably drew heavily from when creating *The Birth of a Nation*. Mayer seems to under-cite in general: he provides incomplete documentation on the nature and pattern of the touring companies and does not note where his evidence comes from beyond the cited information for the Southern Amusement Company.

field of theatre history studies, but I will also lend a deeper theoretical reading to these performances. Using sociology-of culture-theory and viewing these productions as sites of memory, one can argue that the construction of race, ethnicity, gender, and citizenship was under constant construction and destruction within Civil War memories in performance.

Sites of Cultural Memory: Sites of Power, Class, Nation, and Symbolic Values

The cultural work done by war memorials pertaining to the Civil War and to other conflicts has been pursued by numerous scholars. Along with commemorating those who served and survived, memorials are part of the process of dealing with the dead, an especially beleaguered practice during and following the Civil War. There were an unprecedented number of casualties suffered on both sides during the Civil War (not to mention a loss of money, infrastructure, and property – which, for the Confederates, included slaves). John Neff says that the war "wrenched the nation from its moorings in a thousand ways, but none of its disruptions were as important or as deeply felt as the death it produced."[78] It is little wonder then that a flurry of monuments followed in the wake of the war as a means to help communities cope with the bodies and the disruption of the rituals of the Victorian "Good Death."[79]

James Mayo describes the war memorial in a useful light, as "an artifact…[that] helps create an ongoing order and meaning beyond the fleeting and chaotic experiences of life."[80] These memorials have not only "sentiment and utility" – particularly important to communities and families that would never receive the bodies of their dead, lying unmarked in a battlefield grave – but a "social purpose" which serves a larger audience.[81] Even if these memorials were created by and for a specific and contained community, they are inextricably linked to the

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[78] John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 24.
[79] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 7.
[80] James M. Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 1.
[81] Ibid., 6.

national; this is especially the case with Civil War monuments, as this was, after all, a national conflict. As John Bodnar points out, it is "usually…the local and personal past that is incorporated into a nationalized public memory rather than the other way around."[82] Of course Mayo and Bodnar are writing about fixed and materialized memorials, geographically rooted in a particular environment; but I would argue that performances of historical memory serve this same memorial function.[83]

To support my argument, it is helpful to return to some of the foundational theorists in the field of memory studies: Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora. Halbwachs was instrumental in theorizing the social aspects of memory construction, which he referred to as "collective memory." Memory on an individual basis was reconstructed "under the pressure of society," but was located within families and other social groupings which provided the frameworks and triggers for memory storage, shaping, and retrieval; in effect, individual memory was a false notion, since it was inspired by and defined by the group.[84]

Pierre Nora built upon Halbwach's work with his *lieux de mémoire*, or "sites of memory," which are places "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself."[85] *Lieux* are always simultaneously material, symbolic, and functional; Nora claims they can consist of events, monuments, textual materials, or even mental conceptions. The flexibility of the *lieu* is its utility: his *lieux* are "mixed, hybrid, mutant" sites, which "only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of

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[82] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 17. Bodnar goes on to say that "local, regional, class, and ethnic interests are sustained in one form or another in the final product, but the dominant meaning is usually nationalistic."

[83] For more on Civil War memorials and the Lost Cause in particular, see *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, eds. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).

[84] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 51. See also Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1992).

[85] Pierre Nora, "Between History and Memory: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7.

their ramifications."[86] The malleability of these sites and the ability to re-assign their symbolic values are critical to understanding their functionality. The materiality, pliability, and ideological nature of these sites are all inextricably connected.

For Nora's sites to endure, as Jay Winter points out, they require "money and time to construct or preserve."[87] While Winter is limiting his scope to monuments, I will expand his economic evaluation to include performances of cultural memory. Winter claims there is a "business of remembrance," and it is this business of remembrance in theatrical performance that I will explore, with each production/play text serving as a site of memory.[88] These sites of performed memory, as is the case with any performance of memory in the public forum, are invested with capital, labor, and power. Indeed, Nora's sites "were created, invented, or reworked to serve the nation-state."[89] The nation can designate juridical status and bestow or deny rights, and sites can serve as a reminder of the nation's claims to power over its denizens. Since sites are invested with nationalistic interests, they are also "full of nationalism, and far from being neutral or free of value judgments."[90]

These sites are unarguably mediated cultural products. Raymond Williams theorizes mediation as an "active process" that gets around the base/superstructure reflective model, whereby "the social realities are 'projected' or 'disguised', and recovering the piece's meaning is a process of working back through the mediation to their original forms."[91] Williams continues to expand upon this notion of mediation, describing how one could expose a "structure of feeling" – as opposed to an ideology or world-view, which do not convey the sense of process that Williams constantly touches upon – or a "cultural hypothesis, actually derived from attempts to understand such elements and their connections in a generation or period, and

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[86] Ibid., 19.
[87] Jay Winter, "Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2010), 65.
[88] I will be focusing solely on plays that I can verify were indeed staged; unless they were produced, these plays could not be invested with the political and social values in an embodied form.
[89] Pim den Beor, "*Loci memoriae—Lieux de mémoire*," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, 21.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 97-98.

needing always to be returned, interactively, to such evidence."[92] By repeatedly bringing the idea of culture as "process" to the fore, Williams allows for multiple and constantly changing interpretations of culture and "structures of feeling," which in turn link back to real institutional practices and material forces.[93] These sites, then, can be worked back through to expose various structures of feeling.

Along with these ideas of culture as "process" and as *lieux* being critical to the process of cultural memory, Pierre Bourdieu adds another useful approach to unpacking the cultural sites. Mediation, according to Williams, hides the social and economic realities of production to the viewer, thereby masking the exploitation and hierarchical power that is in operation. Bourdieu brings the much-needed angle of reception into this theoretical mix, discussing the "symbolic production of the work, i.e., the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work."[94] In Bourdieu's field of cultural production, there is a sort of game being played by the different participants (both producers and consumers). This field of production is "the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated."[95] As Williams proposes the

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[92] Ibid., 132-3.

[93] I must also point out the Marxist basis for Williams's process-oriented approach. It is within a footnote of Volume I of *Capital* that David Harvey pinpoints what will later become the model of dialectical theory. Marx is presenting a co-evolutionary theory of capital in all its possible "moments," and it is this notion of culture as a constantly evolving and fluctuating process that must be highlighted. The "conceptual elements" that constitute this process, as Harvey draws it out of Marx, are as follows: "nature," the "actual process of production," "the production and reproduction of daily life," social relations" and "mental conceptions" – all of which are "in motion, linked through 'processes of production' that guide human evolution." Of course, evolution does not always mean "progress" in a positivistic sense – instead, Marx is pointing out the revolutionizing capabilities (and thus, omnivorous aspects) of capital. According to Harvey, Marx "is saying…that technologies and organizational forms *internalize* a certain relation to nature as well as to mental conceptions and social relations, daily life, and labor processes." David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital*, 192.The actual quote from Marx is: "Technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations." Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, trans. BenFowkes (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), 493.

[94] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randall Jackson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 37.

[95] Ibid., 78.

dominant, emergent, and residual in cultural forms and forces, so Bourdieu admits that there could be outliers who eventually emerge into the main frays within the field.

This combination of theories on *lieux* and the sociology of culture provides a framework for unpacking the nationalist ideologies, structures of feelings, symbolic values, and the various intersections of class, power, and taste that are staged under the auspices of a particular vision of cultural memory. Artistic works produced by a particular culture are always mediated to hide social and labor relations within a particular historical moment, which is part of a greater field that vies for assigning value and domination.

The sites of memory, products, and historic visions created by theatre, however, differ substantially from other sites of memorialization that are typically mentioned in Civil War studies (monuments, cemeteries, novels, memoirs, poems, songs, films, etc.). Theatre of course uses *live* bodies in an ephemeral performance. This is where the work of Paul Connerton will serve as a bridge, connecting sites of memory to performing bodies. These bodies are read as part of a complex interpretive strategy, whereby bodies are inscribed with value-laden labels of gender, race and ethnicity. Furthermore, these bodies represent claims to citizenship and juridical rights, which are in turn validated or denied within a vision of history. This manipulation represents the ideal citizen and nation of that particular performed vision, thrusting this phantasm onto the stage for popular consumption.

Bodies Performing History: Visions and Revisions of Citizenship

Paul Connerton firmly inserts the body into the conversation of cultural memory. While he agrees with the referential argument that "our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past," Connerton believes that habit memory and embodied performance are sorely needed to explain the social structures of memory.[96] His "habit memory" typically falls within a rubric of "set of rules for defining 'proper' behavior" which can be

[96] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

interpreted "either as a structure of feeling or as a pattern of institutional control."[97] Connerton specifically mentions commemorative ceremonies and rituals in his analysis, but also includes how bodies perform social rites and everyday habits. While there is certainly a ritualistic component to performance (as theorized by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner among others), I am not arguing that these theatrical productions of cultural memory are all ritualistic in nature; but since they are re-staging history, they are undoubtedly commemorative. Locating the body as a site where cultural memory is performed must also invest the body with all the veiling mediation, political and national ideologies, and symbolic values that were discussed in the prior section. In some circumstances, bodies, like cultural products, can be decoded to decipher symbolic and political value. The critical question then becomes how the moving and marked bodies—especially those representing "authentic" historical figures or gendered, racial, and ethnic Others—presented on the late nineteenth-/early-twentieth century stage could potentially be *read* within the performance of a particular production.

Decoding performing bodies for their mediated vision of memory is not the only reading process applied to bodies throughout US history. Robyn Wiegman argues that bodies in modernity are visually decoded simultaneously for race and gender, one category contributing to the other. Building upon her Foucauldian evaluation of visuality, Wiegman also makes claims for how her approach could potentially address popular performance, arguing that "the visual terrain of popular culture increasingly commodifies identities according to the logic of corporeal inscription."[98] This inscription and subsequent reading of bodies serves to "secure the tenuousness of race to a framework of stable boundaries, which in turn provides the necessary grounding for the ideology of white supremacy."[99] Therefore, decoding both historical performing bodies and the history those bodies performed can help to illuminate hidden relations of power and symbolic capital invested in these sites of performance. Racially and

[97] Ibid., 83.
[98] Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 7.
[99] Ibid., 9.

ethnically marked and gendered bodies are critical to these Civil War memory performances. Pining lovers, endangered women, emasculated Confederates, hyper-masculine Federalists, comic Stage Irish or Dutch, minstrel blacks, leering blackface or mulatto rapists: these are the sorts of characters that peopled the stage in productions of Civil War memories. As driving dramaturgical forces, race, ethnicity, class, and gender are critical to the structure, characters, and bodies pressing these staged narratives forward.

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century bodies were subjected to constant deciphering on a daily basis, not just when displayed on a stage. How bodies were decoded directly influenced the juridical rights bestowed upon that body. Rogers Smith shows how the Gilded Age was "the era of the militant WASP, whose concerns to protect and enhance his cultural hegemony were vastly more pronounced in citizenship laws than efforts to aid capitalism."[100] Even in the Progressive Era, he continues, the men and women claiming to hold democratic and humanitarian ideals really practiced a "centrist progressivism" that promoted "social control."[101] Smith details the "importance of cultural homogeneity, the dangers of immigration, the improvidence of black enfranchisement, the propriety of Anglo-Saxon racial domination, and the maintenance of some basic distinctions in the domestic and civic responsibility of men and women" to these centrists; painting a grim picture for the disenfranchised denizens of the United States in the decades after Reconstruction and leading up to World War I.[102]

This inclination towards exclusionary legislation has been clearly articulated by Ian Haney López. Haney López demonstrates how "law is one of the most powerful mechanisms by which any society creates, defines, and regulates itself," arguing that law – as a social

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[100] Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 348.
[101] Ibid., 413.
[102] Ibid.

construction – also constructs race.[103] Both "coercion and ideology" create and maintain the legal construction of race, whereby "historically contingent social systems of meaning that attach to elements of morphology and ancestry."[104] Through the naturalization of whiteness, a series of exclusionary citizenship laws and prerequisite cases are subjected to close analysis by Haney López. When the construction of whiteness was threatened, courts exercised a series of rationales – including the "'understanding of the common man"; i.e., the perception of an everyday man encountering an Othered body – to determine whether or not the defendant was entitled to juridical rights.[105] Operating along the axis of whiteness, law was constructed to stabilize, naturalize, and reify the privilege and perceived superiority of the white man.

Haney López is examining particular court cases, but Falguni Sheth brings the theoretical weight of political philosophy to bear on exclusionary racial practices. Theorizing race as a technology of states and institutions, Sheth argues that race works as a technology in three ways: "instrumental[ly]" by classifying peoples, "naturalizing" by identifying those that are unruly and basing race on this unruliness, and through "concealment," which hides "our relationship to law and sovereign power as one of vulnerability and violence."[106] Sheth also presents the possibility to broaden the discourse to other immigrant characters represented onstage rather than simply examining a reductive black/white binary. Her model requires at least three populations to operate: a border population – a previously excluded outcast group – which functions as a barrier between the unruly and the state. After the state tentatively includes the border population (serving as an apology for its past exclusion), the border population is used as a "Moral Gauge" for the taming of the unruly outsider. This "taming" requires that institutional power find ways to revoke the rights of this population under the guise of those

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[103] Ian Haney López,*White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race,* 10th Anniversary Edition (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 9.
[104] Ibid., 13-14.
[105] Ibid., 64.
[106] Falguni Sheth, *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 8.

controlling them.[107] Ultimately, the interests of those that benefit most from the continuation of sovereign power survive and thrive.

In the time period I am addressing, the mass influx of immigrants in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era must serve as a backdrop while charting the changing political nature and work of race and ethnicity. I wish to explore how race, ethnicity, and class work in these productions and how such constructions are deployed to label, oppress, and include/exclude peoples from the stage and – by extension – the imagined state. By labeling certain characters, via both design and performance, as "unruly" and thus falling outside the carefully regulated borders of whiteness or "appropriate" behavior (often defined by a conflation of race, ethnicity, and class), the producers make clear claims to citizenship and juridical rights that are being dramatized. By staging a version of the country's history and by denying an instrumental role in that history to various men and women, these visions of Civil War memory are excluding certain peoples from the future of the re-unified nation state. The exclusion of these characters within these embodied and performed sites of memory creates further blurs and elides within a vision of cultural memory, revealing the instability and constructedness of law itself.

Constructing Holistic Visions of Civil War Memories in US Theatre

This theoretical assumption will remain constant throughout the dissertation: these performances are mediated sites of memory, invested with ideology and power, and practicing inclusionary/exclusionary tactics and/or modes of resistance within the constantly shifting constructions of race, ethnicity, gender, law, and nation. I will fix the increasingly commercialized stage productions of memories within the three competing visions (competing both internally to reify the vision and without against the other visions) of Civil War memory. The blurring of these visions will reveal the fault lines in constructions of identity, citizenship, and the nation state. I will constantly return to the following queries: what version of history is

[107] Ibid., 129-45.

being staged, and by/for whom is it being produced? How does it align with or challenge a particular vision of Civil War memory? Where do blind spots and blurs occur? How are gender, class, race, and ethnicity represented in these productions? What relations of power are hidden within these mediated, popular/proto-mass cultural products? What exclusionary or inclusionary technologies of race or citizenship are deployed? What are the attempts to reify or destabilize the constructions of identity, citizenship, and nation within this performed site of memory?

Chapter 2 will be devoted to the reconciliationist narrative. Productions of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) plays written and performed by/for Union veterans will serve as a precedent, looking at how the Unionist narrative collapsed at moments into the reconciliationist vision. The GAR, whose clout peaked from the 1880s into the mid-1890s, was the most politically powerful veterans' organization after the Civil War. The GAR's tenets of charity, loyalty, and fraternity proved to be both limited and limiting to certain minority veterans as the organization struggled to define itself and the "history" of the war. I will track this political devolution into a gendered and eventually white-supremacist reunionist narrative from GAR productions to fodder for popular stage melodramas of the 1880s and 90s, while reading these narratives alongside the exclusionary practices of the GAR and the legislative restrictions passed by the US government towards the close of the nineteenth century. The gender and racial/ethnic dynamics of all of these productions – including by whom and for whom they were staged – are all crucial to the process of pinpointing the blurs and blind spots within the reconciliationist vision.

Sites of memory staged by African American performers will be the subject of chapter 3, where moments of counter-memory appeared as the commercialized reunion narrative grew increasingly popular. To fully investigate the emancipationist vision, I will work within Barbara Webb's model wherein African American identity could be authenticated in commercial productions. The historical narratives, claims to juridical rights, and gendered constructions of

blackness in early African American musicals will serve as the entry points for my inquiry, including productions of the Hyers Sisters, Billy McClain, and Will Marion Cook, amongst others. Kathleen Clark argues that debates within the black community in many ways inhibited the establishment of a cohesive emancipationist narrative: I will concentrate in particular on the gendered constructions in the representations of black men and women, which were debated both within the black community and on the larger national stage.[108] I will focus on moments where the possibilities of citizenship were both celebrated and/or interrogated. Even if there was a critique of post-Reconstruction race relations or a commemoration of black identity and history, these productions still had to be commercially viable and operate within and against the growing popularity of the white reunionist narrative.

The white supremacist version of the war and Reconstruction gained credence towards the end of the nineteenth century, and plays/productions that catered to this vision will be analyzed in chapter 4. I will explore the Lost Cause plays that sought to rebuild the South and rewrite the war, ennobling the Confederate cause to a heroic level that intertwined chivalry and race politics in a violent and virulent site of memory. Interestingly, it was not just the dramatic heirs of Jubal A. Early, like Thomas Dixon, Jr., who promoted the romantic vision of white hooded knights defending the endangered virtue of white women from rapacious black men: Northern playwrights also contributed to this romanticized mirage.[109] Thus I will look at the pervasive romanticizing of the South in these performed sites of memory, including plays written both by Southern Lost Cause adherents as well as productions that staged Southern history in the North: all of these productions contributed to the dramatic vision of white supremacy on the popular stage. The reconciliationist narrative dominated the stage, especially towards the close of the nineteenth century when legislation codifying racial and ethnic

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[108] Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments*.
[109] For instance, even Steele MacKaye's *The Fool's Errand* (1881), adapted from Albion Tourgée's 1879 novel, made the distinction between aristocratic Southern white men who joined the Klan initially for security reasons and the poor, uneducated white men who used the Klan to settle personal vendettas and attack the helpless (but, the play suggests, inferior in their helplessness) African Americans.

separation and/or exclusion was being widely adopted – and the progressive gains sought by the Radical Republicans were being undone. This chapter will situate the Lost Cause mythology in a longer trajectory of these mythic depictions, destabilizing the romanticized historical claims of these sites, and will investigate the power, violence, and exclusion deeply entrenched in them. It is this accomodationist and racially exclusionary model that would prevail well into mid-twentieth-century popular/mass culture. As the Civil War expanded from theatres into movie houses, the commodification of war memory likewise took on a more widely disseminated and profitable mode of production. The supremacist reunion narrative was projected on numerous screens and (re-)seen by millions of people across the nation, leaving an indelible mark on the trajectory of Civil War memory.

The staged narratives of gender, class, race, and ethnicity in the mediated and performed sites of memory that I will examine in my dissertation will ultimately reveal a contradictory understanding of democracy and an ongoing contest over who is allowed to participate in the democratic state. The exclusionary, hegemonic, heterotopic, and sentimentalized nostalgia of antebellum race and gender relations was the most commercially successful and enduring mental conception of Civil War history as America's role in world relations expanded exponentially in the early twentieth century. The blind spots that are revealed when examining these commercially performed visions of Civil War memory holistically divulge the unstable nature of the law, the construction of citizenship, and the imagined nation. In the attempt to stage the "real war," the sites of memory produced on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century US stage reveal the inability to adequately express a coherent, enduring, and achievable vision of union and democracy.

Chapter 2

The Reconciliationist Vision Onstage:

Preserving the Union (and Its White Manly Parts)

Ulysses S. Grant, his popularity heightened in the wake of a well-publicized world tour, was the honored guest at the California Theatre production of *The Color Guard* on September 23, 1879 in San Francisco.[1] The large crowd gathered outside awaiting his arrival began cheering as the general approached the theatre. When the former president and his entourage entered the venue (fashionably late), the fanfare from outside carried over into the theatre. The audience interrupted the performance and gave the general a standing ovation.[2] Act II resumed once the audience settled down after the general's belated arrival, and the scene opened in a Tennessee mountain tavern on stage. Several Southerners with divided loyalties sit drinking, with a stage German and Irish character imbibing with the company. The villain Alfred Thornton joins them and attempts to recruit the drinkers to the Confederate side. Thornton's sole reason for fighting the North is to avenge his scorned love – though he fails to mention this to those gathered. Instead he rants that the Union flag is the "emblem of abolition and oppression," claiming he was almost lynched for his Southern loyalties (a patent lie, spectators present for the first act would agree).[3] The stage ethnic Others display a distinct lack of patriotism for either side. Tom Flynn says that his German"frien'" should "give yersel' no thrubble about goin' wid the Union or the Sthate; but give me the dollar an' fifty cints ye promised, an' go wid me an' I'll dhrink yer health in a bumper." Peter Hygley, the German character, initially declares he "swears mit de

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[1] Joan Waugh claims that Grant was the "most famous living American" upon his 1879 return. See Waugh, *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 162.
[2] "Honoring General Grant," *New York Times,* September 24, 1879, 1.
[3] A. R. Calhoun, *The Color Guard* (Providence: Millard, Gray & Simpson, Steam Printers, 1872), 16. *The Color Guard* was often produced as an amateur production, but this particular production—excepting the drilling by the militia—was acted by a professional troupe.

Union," but the next time he appears he is bungling countersign operations as a Confederate guard.[4]

In the most spectacle-driven scene that Grant would have witnessed, a group of pro-Union Southern refugees swear upon the Union colors while under fire by rebel troops: "I pledge…to lay down my life to defend this flag, which I sweare [sic] to protect, as the emblem of the whole Union; and I promise before Heaven always to stand by my brothers."[5] These "brothers," coincidentally, are all white, Southern refugees – there are no minorities or ethnic characters in their midst. Grant only remained until the tail end of the third act, but the famed savior of the Union was present to see the celebration of white native-born fraternity.

The general's reception upon his return to the United States was quite warm, considering the attacks on his reputation as president. Joan Waugh details the accusations of cronyism that Grant endured throughout his executive tenure. National financial unrest was blamed upon his party (a recurring trend in American politics) and a series of scandals was linked to his advisors, cabinet members, and other corrupt federal officials. Depictions rendered by his contemporary oppositional press and by later historians were far from flattering.[6] Waugh also notes that Grant had unfortunate timing, as his political ascendency coincided with the Gilded Age. Mark Twain gave the era its name and characterized it as a time of greed and dirty politics in the early 1870s. Twain and his co-author declared that the United States was far from "a state where there is no fever of speculation, no inflamed desire for sudden wealth, where the poor are all simple-minded and contented, and the rich are all honest and generous, where society is in a state of primitive purity, and politics is the occupation of only the capable and the patriotic."[7] Under the spell of tremendous postwar capitalist expansion, the nation was far from the ideal yearned for by America's foremost satirist.

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[4] Ibid., 19.
[5] Calhoun, *The Color Guard*, 21.
[6] See Waugh, *U.S. Grant*, chapter 3.
[7] Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-Day* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1873), v.

The rapid growth of the industrial and mechanized sectors that characterized the Gilded Age was not restricted to the economic area alone, of course. It is helpful to recall Marx's symbiotic dialectical method, whereby various elements of life (the relation to nature, modes of production, reproduction of daily life, mental conceptions, social relations, and technology) are inextricably linked: a shift in one produces a shift in all elements, so that they "coevolve and are subject to perpetual renewal and transformation as dynamic moments."[8] As Alan Trachtenberg points out, the "remaking of cultural perceptions" is part and parcel of economic change. Trachtenberg argues that the shift towards the "incorporation of America" is not only about the "expansion of an industrial capitalist system" and its various technologies but – more crucially to the denizens of the Gilded Age – "the emergence of a changed, more tightly structured society with new hierarchies of control, and also changed conceptions of that society."[9] The consolidation of capital in this period and the series of financial crises that resulted in the attempts to re-negotiate this new flow of resources are indicative of larger shifts in societal practices and ways of life.

Within the emerging and changing hierarchies in both the Gilded Age (1866-1898) and Progressive eras (1898-1914), it is clear that – much like the preceding Reconstruction period – society failed to reconcile the ideals of democracy with the social and juridical practice of equality.[10] Rogers Smith maintains that the main story of the Gilded Age in all facets of life is "the mounting repudiation of Reconstruction egalitarianism and inclusiveness" in order to

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[8] David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010), 196.
[9] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (2007; rpt. New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 3-4.
[10] Alan Trachtenberg suggests that the "incorporation" that characterized the Gilded Age began immediately after the war, whereas Rogers Smith (amongst others) places the beginning of the era right after Reconstruction's demise. Since Joan Waugh also makes a case for Grant's presidency (1869-77) as being linked to the Gilded Age and Twain coined the term in 1873, I find the broader time designation fior the start of the Gilded Age to be more helpful when considering cultural formations. Though the financial panic of 1893 certainly contributed to a decline in economic growth years prior to 1898, Rogers Smith convincingly marks the beginning of the Spanish-American War as the start of Progressivism. This war "reflected the exuberant new confidence of progressives" and their desire to "order the future, at home and abroad." See Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in US History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 411.

establish "renewed ascriptive hierarchies" on multiple levels of society. [11] This ascriptive aspect of exclusion continues well into the Progressive Era's social control agenda, masking the marks of difference under the guise of educational enlightenment.

Changing ways of life and hierarchies also entail new habits for utilizing leisure time and thereby change the content and consumption of cultural offerings. Theatrical performances of Civil War memories were only one amongst the many available leisure outlets introduced to the upper and aspiring middle classes in the late nineteenth century, but there was a bustling business involved in staging the war. In this chapter, I will use various lenses to explore the reconciliationist reunion vision of Civil War memory as presented onstage.[12] There are two major modes of theatrical production pertaining to the sites of memory explored here: amateur productions, especially as embodied by Civil War veterans themselves under the auspices of the Grand Army of the Republic, and commercial stage productions. The performances on both the amateur and professional stages give further insight into the shifting and conflicted nature of the reunion vision.

I will begin this chapter by contextualizing these performed sites of Civil War memories within the incorporation of theatre and the business of theatre-making in the late nineteenth century. There are claims to identity, class position, and status that are embedded in the pursuit of leisure activities, including theatre-going and producing. Next, I will discuss tensions within the framework of staging "real" history or inserting aspects of realism within dramatic representations of the war. The changing structure of feeling regarding the "real" in late nineteenth-century culture reveals differing approaches towards melodrama, realism, and the causes of the war.[13] I will also consider the variously presented justifications for fighting the war which ultimately divulge a gendered, romantic, and racialized vision of reunion. I will argue that dramatic representations of the Union cause and the reconciliationist vision were ultimately –

[11] Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 347.
[12] I will be using "reconciliationist" and "reunion" interchangeably throughout, since reconciling with the ex-Confederate states and constituents necessitated sectionalist reunion as well.
[13] Cf. page 25 of chapter 1 for the usage of "structure of feeling."

due to the dramaturgical structure of melodrama and its complicity with the reunion narrative – one and the same. The war, whether for the body politic or the body procreative, is consistently the melodramatic impediment towards (re)union and the intrusion that must be removed to allow the re-establishment of what Peter Brooks calls the "space of innocence." Brooks theorized that the desire for the space of innocence was in fact the crux of the melodramatic action, arguing that the "violation and spoliation of the space of innocence stands as a recurrent representation of the dilemma confronting innocence."[14] Linda Williams further suggests that melodrama "begins, and wants to end, in a 'space of innocence,'" which is not always a fixed location but can also be interpreted as "nostalgia for a virtuous place."[15] Thus the very logic of the Union and reunion narrative and the need to achieve this melodramatic space of innocence demands an embrace of the wayward Southern brethren, at the juridical expense of women and minorities. In these staged sites of memories, there are repeated exclusionary models at play rather than the displays of democratic Union the characters purportedly want. A restrictive utopian space of gendered and racialized innocence is ultimately articulated in these performances. Both the amateur and commercial representations of the Civil War that originated on Northern and Midwestern stages display the exclusionary aspects in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity that would come to characterize the reunion vision of Civil War memory. When these plays are investigated more closely, the present day reader becomes aware that these productions – no matter how much bloody shirt rhetoric is invoked – are easily aligned with the reconciliationist vision, preparing an audience for the white supremacist narratives of the Civil War on stage that will gain popularity after the turn of the century.[16]

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[14] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 30.
[15] Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White From Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 28.
[16] Republicans of the Gilded Age often "waved the bloody shirt" as a rhetorical device in political discourse, referencing the wounded and dead Civil War soldiers. This tactic was used to remind voters of the destruction brought on by the Democratic party (and those that instigated or supported secession more generally). For a succinct overview on the use and decline of this rhetoric, see Patrick J. Kelly, "The Election of 1896 and the Restructuring of Civil War Memory," in *The Memory of the Civil War in*

Of the nearly eighty extant plays that can be linked to Civil War memory falling within the Union and reunion visions of Civil War memory, I will be drawing upon forty texts (approximately twenty amateur and/or GAR-associated plays, and around twenty professional melodramas) for a closer examination of the produced sites of war memories.[17] I have also limited my discussion mainly to the plays produced before the turn of the century, though some of the play texts continued to be performed into the twentieth century. This chronological cut-off point is largely due to the fact that the most popular and enduring of the Civil War commercial melodramas (both in terms of revivals and in the canonical US dramatic literature) were originally performed before 1900, and these were the dramas which served as the basis for later versions of Civil War memories onstage. The reason for omitting other titles is not for lack of consultation or available resources, but because only a finite group of these plays can be linked to an actual theatrical production. Without proof of performance, these plays do not meet the parameters and theoretical premises set forth in the first chapter: namely, the performance and embodiment of these Civil War memories permits consumption to be ascertained, and the circulation of particular forms of social and political capital and ideologies can only be assured if there is conclusive evidence of performance. Whether or not these ideologies were embraced is part of a larger discussion, since – as we know from the work done on audience reception theory – it is hard to determine what every house member took away from a given production: as such, the always-insufficient words of reviewers will have to suffice in conveying a general sense of audience response, along with other archival paraphernalia.

The work of newspaper reviewers in this era is particularly problematic, as the entrepreneurs of the late nineteenth century were – in the steps of Barnum – often quite

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American Culture, Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004): 180-212.

[17] I will be using the designations "amateur" and "GAR" plays interchangeably throughout. The GAR was one of the largest organizations performing these plays, but many other amateur dramatic associations (those with veterans and not) staged these texts. I do not mean to imply that these texts were *only* performed by the GAR when referring to them as such, but the materials were often explicitly marketed or dedicated to this organization.

efficient self-promoters. Pierre Bourdieu's work on homologies between positions in the field of cultural production promotes the viability of utilizing the work of critics from this (or any other) time period. He points out the overdetermined nature of the critics' position, whereby they "defend the ideological interests of their clientele when defending their own interests."[18] Within this framework, it is helpful to consider critics and their readership as ideological bedfellows via these homologies. This is not to say that one critic predicting a long run for a particular production was always endorsing the views of the readership (because there are certainly instances wherein such predictions proved false), but the work of critics must be construed as always attempting to cater to and construct the tastes of individual readers and potential theatre spectators.

Other evidence, such as newspaper ads and individual responses (diaries, memoirs, etc.) must also be utilized to undertake a reconstruction of the ephemeral performances of the past. Additionally, due to the sheer number of plays covered in this survey, there will not be detailed plot summaries or individual case studies: rather, the overall *terrain* of the sites of Civil War memory, sharing some sentiment of the reunion vision, will be explored, with illustrative, supporting, or contradictory examples that emerge at various access points.[19]

I am *not* arguing that these productions within the reconciliationist vision – the participants, playwrights, directors, etc., – were consciously trying to preserve their positions within an ascriptive hierarchy per se.[20] As Gary Gallagher argues, most Civil War-era Americans "did not begin each day by thinking immediately about the need to protect a privileged status conveyed by their 'whiteness,'" nor was this the constant waking thought of most late nineteenth-century citizens.[21] It is undeniable, however, that the seismic transformations in

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[18] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randall Jackson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 94.
[19] Even when contradictions or exceptions emerge, they very often provide yet another pathway to the proverbial rule of exclusion and white male supremacy.
[20] This will not be the case when encountering the work of white supremacist producers, like Thomas Dixon, Jr., in a later chapter.
[21] Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 44.

domestic, urban, class, racial/ethnic identities and modes of living throughout the Gilded Age and leading up to the close of the century did breed a host of anxieties about the changing nature of "American" life. With all the transformations, Rogers Smith believes that "many Americans rejected the prospect of a fully liberal free labor society, with equal rights and opportunities for all races, religions, and genders. Such a society endangered too much that they valued."[22] I wish to explore the exclusionary logic of reunion that came to the fore in the Gilded Age and how it was articulated in performance practices, revealing the widespread embrace of the foundation of the white supremacist vision via the consumption of dramatic representations of Civil War memories. On postwar stages there were differing tastes, political alliances, and sectional backgrounds that were pandered to in these various sites of performance, but the exclusionary tendency persists throughout.

The Business of Staging the War

Theatre was part of the overall incorporation of America, and the business of Civil War memory and the business of theatre intertwined robustly throughout the late nineteenth century. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the move away from stock to combination companies and the growing monopolization via circuits of syndication were part of the revolutions in technology and transportation characterizing the close of the nineteenth century. Embodied Civil War memory was not only performed on the major commercial New York stages: there were hundreds of amateur dramatic associations that were creating their own sites of Civil War memory in towns, villages, and smaller cities all over the country. The business of staging the Civil War, both by amateur groups and in professional houses, must be understood as a *business*: the taste of dramatic associations, publishing houses, commercial producers, and the public at large were both constitutive of and constituted by the larger structure of feelings regarding the memory of the Civil War in US culture. These sites of memory on the amateur and

[22] Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 348.

commercial stages –as sites of production and consumption as well – represent not only various uses of leisure time, but the middling sort's desire for bourgeois status and the constant renegotiation of always-unstable class formations.

The patterns of leisure activity varied greatly after the Civil War, and the Gilded Age and Progressive Eras both display an increasing "democratization of entertainment" that catered to the lower and "middling" classes.[23] The immediate postwar years witnessed a growing number of office-bound workers tied to manufacturing and distinctly separate from manual labor, an overall "growth of managerial and clerical tasks and hierarchies within the nation's enlarging institutions."[24] Class separation at the workplace led to class separation in living situations as well, particularly in large cities.[25] Sven Beckert argues that the disdain for the lower classes in postbellum New York City was such that the "city was a corporation that only its stockholders should control" where the "'masses' now were conceived of as being outside the bound of political citizenship."[26] Clearly, there were multiple reasons for the bourgeoisie and middling classes to aspire towards economic, social, and cultural elitism—especially if the promise of social inclusion was bound up with juridical equality.

As part of the changing nature of leisure time, theatrical entrepreneurs harnessed the tastes of the growing portion of the population that identified as middle class and created new tastes at the same time, catering to all so as to seem completely "public" and accessible, "exciting enough to appeal to the millions, and respectable enough to offend no one," as David Nasaw phrases it.[27] Of course, the concept of class in and of itself is not a fixed, stable entity, nor is there a simple method of categorizing groups: but, as Andrea Volpe points out, class can be

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[23] Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1999), 32. See also Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).
[24] Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 268.
[25] Ibid., 275-85.
[26] Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 219.
[27] David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 5.

"'fixed' and stabilized by representational practices." Indeed, her assertion that "it is through representations…that social formation is visible" makes clear that the representations particular groups tend to embrace, use, and consume are important to discerning their desired class position.[28] Thus, one can argue that much of class has to do with self-identification/awareness and the performativity of class. Burton Bledstein claims that class, particularly "becoming middle class" was "a way of doing things, a display of selective *characteristics*."[29] Legitimate commercial theatre – as presented by David Belasco and William Gillette – strove to both inculcate gentility and reassure audiences that consuming dramatic offerings was indeed a display and representation of the audiences' refinement.

The higher prices of the commercial touring groups for "proper" theatre made sure that the aura of respectability was maintained, particularly with the advent of vaudeville in the late 1880s. Much of the appeal in legitimate theatre rested in this perceived respectability wherein ticket prices kept the rabble out: as Miles Orvell points out, "underlying middle-class Victorian taste lay an imitation of American upper-class taste."[30] Robert Allen has documented the rise of variety theatres and vaudeville as an attempt to break away from the purported seditious and scandalous elements of burlesque in this larger middle-class search for "respectability" and bourgeois culture – and how legitimate theatre and vaudeville eventually priced out working and lower-middle-class attendees.[31] Thus while popular entertainment taste-makers attempted to democratize offerings to appeal to a large audience, there was a democratizing movement *only* for certain classes and races: much like the statutes and court rulings passed towards the end of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, "democracy" proved to have a very limited interpretation within social practice. While a certain amount of class mingling could

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[28] Andrea Volpe, "Cartes de Visite Portrait Photographs and the Culture of Class Formation," in *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class,* eds. Burton J. Beldstein and Robert D. Johnston (New York: Routledge, 2001), 160.
[29] Burton J. Bledstein, "Introduction: Storytellers to the Middle Class," in *The Middling Sorts*, 8.
[30] Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 59.
[31] See Robert Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), chapter 6.

occur at theatres, by and large audiences were expected to conform to the codes of bourgeois respectability. Within an already heavily-segmented proportion of the population, there was an inclusivity – but this inclusivity was bought at the exclusion of immigrants and lower working classes.

This "democratization" included the wider availability of theatrical productions. Touring circuits were fully established and exploited with the rise of commercial theatre in the late nineteenth century, as stars increasingly wanted to work with a set cast (or at least the same supporting actors) while touring rather than a single stock company of varying talent, quality, and experience. As combination companies increased alongside the development of the railroad and the possibilities of transportation, touring during this period was the status quo for all performers. Commercial productions successful in major metropolitan areas were sent on the road wholesale, and the "great irony" of "success in New York meant, almost invariably, that one must hit the road."[32] Postlewait characterizes the theatrical entrepreneurs of this period as either "wizards,""inventors," or the capitalist titans of the Syndicate and other trust systems, all of whom "shared the decisive talent for not only producing and delivering entertainment that was both popular and profitable but also creating new audiences for these entertainments."[33]

By both creating new entertainment for and catering to those clamoring to achieve the marks of bourgeois respectability and culture, theatre entrepreneurs often kept the lowest common denominator in mind. While some (like William Gillette) continued to fulfill the actor/manager role of the antebellum years, a new group of theatre entrepreneurs emerged who functioned solely as theatre managers: a group of men with "executive power" who could, as Kim Marra states, "better control the theatre's potentially dangerous and seductive

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[32] Thomas Postlewait, "The Hieroglyphic Stage: American Theatre and Society, Post-Civil War to 1945,"in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume Two: 1870-1945,* eds. Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 150. Postlewait goes on to point out that 100 combination companies were touring in the late 1870s, and that number had nearly tripled by the early twentieth century.
[33] Ibid., 160.

entertainments" in the eyes of those seeking "both pleasure and respectability."[34] These "impresarios" (as Marra dubs them) like Augustin Daly, Charles Frohman, and David Belasco, "emulated the consolidation of power that industrial titans enacted in the business world."[35] The "business" of entertainment was not only a way of making profit from the consumption of leisure activity by increasing numbers of middling and upper-class sorts, but also worked to legitimate theatre in America – especially in the control and taming of the female performing body, a subject Marra explores.

Writers, producers, and publishers of amateur dramas were part of the theatre-making culture after the war, but are often overlooked by scholars. Because many of these productions were staged under the auspices of charity, amateur theatricals allowed performers "to engage in morally questionable behavior while maintaining an outward display of propriety," as Eileen Curley points out.[36] She believes that postwar charity productions had a "dual purpose for participants – fund-raising and leisure entertainment."[37] The representation of amateur participants as bourgeois philanthropists also allowed them to indulge in a previously illicit leisure activity. Amateur theatre became an emergent form of socially sanctioned performance.[38]

The amateur market was quite robust at the time, with play texts not only offering detailed instructions (including elaborate stage diagrams for the amateur player confused by the designation "stage left"), costume, and scenic plots, but guidebooks were likewise published throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, as amateur theatricals moved out of living room parlors and onto community stages. Along with the ostensibly charitable ends, these

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[34] Kim Marra, *Strange Duets: Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1914* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), xiv-xv.
[35] Ibid., xviii.
[36] Eileen Curley, "Tainted Money? Nineteenth Century Charity Theatricals," *Theatre Symposium* 15 (2007): 52-3.
[37] Ibid., 57.
[38] Within the amateur plays explored in this chapter, the women are not typically the main character or dramatic focus. The romantic storyline is often secondary to the military one, which undoubtedly allowed women acting in the dramas to maintain a sense of propriety. Women performing for charity was one thing—performing for wages as an occupation was quite another. See also Curley, "Tainted Money?"

stagings also presented multiple financial opportunities for playwrights nationally.[39] In the case of A.D. Ames and Samuel Muscroft, the authors also undertook the lead roles in their most famous (but now almost entirely forgotten) Civil War plays. *The Drummer Boy* (1868) was one of the most popular amateur war dramas, and its author Muscroft clearly capitalized on its popularity by touring and offering direction/instruction to various posts and cities throughout the Midwest and North.[40] The play continued to endure in Civil War memory, being staged even into the twentieth century by amateur players.[41] In a set of reminiscences published in the *New York Times* in 1934, Harry Miller – a 70-year-old owner of an agency in Manhattan that "sends out directors and costumes for the presentation of amateur shows" at the time of the interview and a "survivor of those ancient days" – specifically recalled the ubiquity of *The Drummer Boy* in terms of the economics of amateur productions:

> …the smart actors usually carried with them a package of plays, just to be safe. If they were stranded they put on an amateur performance under the auspices of some local groups and raised enough cash to go home. They'd have… 'Ten Nights in a Bar-Room' for the W.C.T.U., 'The Drummer Boy of Shiloh' for the G.A.R.[42]

Thus, even staging plays for charity could provide lucrative business opportunities for playwrights and touring actors seeking to capitalize on the amateur market, especially that created by powerful and active political organizations like the Grand Army of the Republic. As local groups and residents participated in creating these sites of Civil War memories, actively staging versions of the war to aid either veterans or their widowed/orphaned families, they were dramatizing the reunion mythos in popular culture.

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[39] Both Albert D. Ames and Samuel Muscroft did this, and it can only be assumed that other playwrights followed suit. See Hope P. Litchfield and Roger E. Stoddard, "A.D. Ames, First Dramatic Publisher in the West," *Books at Brown* 21 (1966): 97-99. The authors say that Ames was quite popular in his work with amateur groups, and traveled all around the Midwest and into New England to both play roles in texts published by his press and direct/instruct the amateur players.

[40] I provide the premiere date rather than the publication date for *The Drummer Boy*. When quoting from a particular text I will supply the date of publication, but when generally referencing the play I will reference the date of its first production.

[41] A GAR post in Boston produced the play as late as December of 1901 as a benefit, and the "large audience did not hesitate to say that it was one of the best entertainments every given by this oppular [sic] organization." See "Reproduced Stirring Scenes of the Civil War," *Boston Daily Globe*, December 12, 1901, 2. It appeared again in Boston in June of 1902 as a benefit for a GAR fund as well, but this time it was staged after a GAR encampment. See "Fusiliers' Night," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 18, 1902,9.

[42] Bosley Crowther, "The Not so Grand Old Theatre," *New York Times*, April 29, 1934, X1.

The Grand Army of the Republic was one of the many fraternal organizations of the time, but was notable for holding impressive political sway during various moments prior to the turn of the century – and for staging plays as part of its charitable projects. Rather than adopting a democratic governing structure, the GAR utilized the rank and file designations of the army and ultimately the corporate hierarchy.[43] Stuart McConnell believes that the GAR was created by Illinois Republicans as "*both* a charitable and political organization…but the political side of the order was not proclaimed publicly."[44] The political aspects of the GAR are inextricably linked to the very founding of the organization itself. Charity was one of a triumvirate of tenets of the GAR – loyalty and fraternity being the other two.[45] The events for raising charitable funds included balls, lectures, fairs, bazaars, as well as dramatics. Theatrical activities appear to be clustered around and marketed to specific localities, which reflects the structure both of the Civil War-era Union army and the GAR posts.[46]

While major metropolitan posts had a better chance of drawing in larger audiences in bigger venues, many of these plays were written under the auspices of a smaller regional post (often in the Midwest) before becoming part of a circuit of amateur performance, advertised by a variety of publishing houses that specialized in catering to this growing trend of amateur theatrical staged in public venues.[47] Clearly authors and publishers hoped that these plays would

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[43] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900*(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 38.
[44] Ibid., 25.
[45] The organization did not subscribe to donating large sums of money. The limited, supplementary amounts bestowed upon veterans, widows, and orphans were part of a larger masculinist project of encouraging independence—construed as a direct correlative of manliness—rather than fiscal dependence. The "fraternity" a veteran could expect was circumscribed in the realm of charity: a veteran's brother would help, but only if no one's liberty and masculinity were compromised due to this act. To be viable capitalist contenders, the veterans could not receive consistent, large hand-outs from their brethren. See McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 136.
[46] Soldiers were recruited out of geographically defined areas for the most part, serving with members of their home community. This local pride manifested itself during and after the war: on the battlefield, in the final Grand Review after the war's close in Washington D.C., and in the GAR posts. Though re-located veterans could join posts in their new area, the sense of localism was widely prevalent—and many veterans identified regionally. See McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 10.
[47] For instance, *The Spy of Atlanta* had its first two showings in Ohio in 1875, at the Opera House in Plymouth and the Town Hall in Republic. *Foiled* first appeared in Connecticut, performed by the Kellog post, which is cited in the dedication. A.D. Ames and C. G. Bartley, *The Spy of Atlanta* (Clyde, OH: A.D.

become popular amongst GAR and amateur producers, with the author of the nine-character *Midnight Charge* assuring readers that the play "might be rendered on a small stage, with only a few actors, with pleasing effect." The play materials further point out that that many of the more spectacular scenes (with live horses and elaborate drills, etc.) could be omitted, in hopes that "our efforts may meet the wants of the G.A.R. and the public in general."[48] To appeal to particular communities, some playwrights, such as Ames of *The Spy of Atlanta*, left references to local merchants blank in the final scene so that the actors could insert the appropriate names. The repeated dedications to veterans and GAR posts suggest that playwrights and publishers sensed that there was clearly a market for their wares.

Even when produced by a large urban post with an increased likelihood of professional actors, the cast was most often amateur – a mix of both veterans and other local amateur actors (which goes without saying for the women performing, since they were excluded from the GAR), with an occasional professional actor or two appearing in the production.[49] Based on newspaper ads, such collaborations between GAR posts and amateur dramatic societies seem to have been rather common: since almost every GAR play includes a heterosexual romance and features a tableaux where the women of the town present the flag to the recruits, the female members of the local theatre societies would have been necessary to fill out these obligatory scenes.

Another intriguing piece of evidence that lends insight into the processes of class representation in amateur dramatics is the extant carte de visite scrapbook of Robert Gordon.

Ames, 1879), 2; O.W. Cornish, *Foiled; or, A Struggle for Life and Liberty* (Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Company, c. 1871); 3. It so happens that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, one of the largest bloc of veteran soldiers was in the Midwest. See Patrick J. Kelly, "The Election of 1896 and the Restructuring of Civil War Memory," in *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture,* Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 182.

[48] W. Ellsworth Stedmen, *The Midnight Charge* (New York: Samuel French, [c. 1892]), 2.

[49] Reviews and other mentions in newspapers confirm that amateur actors were indeed primarily the performers of these texts. As one example, *The Confederate Spy* was staged by a GAR post and an amateur dramatic association at the Manhattan Athletic Club in February 1892 "Coming Events," *New York Times,* February 5, 1892, 3. One instance mentions that when *The Color Guard* was produced in New York at the Academy of Music for a benefit, "the performers, with one exception, Mr. Charles Collins the comedian, were amateurs." What part Mr. Collins undertook is not clear, but he probably took on one of the ethnic roles, since they presented the most comic relief in these plays. "Amusements," *New York Times,* September 2, 1873, 5.

Carte de visite albums were, at this time, a "proof and artifact of status and position," and a very common self-created representation of middle class status.[50] Gordon, a veteran of the Indiana Infantry, played Tom Elliot in Samuel Muscroft's *The Drummer Boy, or the Battle of Shiloh* at the Metropolitan Theatre in Indianapolis in June 10-20th of 1868 [see images 1-7]. *The Drummer Boy* appeared only days earlier in Sandusky, Ohio: Muscroft, also a veteran, appeared as Mart Howard in both productions, as well as "Master" Eugene Taylor as the drummer boy—[see image 8], suggesting a rather quick rehearsal period with the Indianapolis group.[51] Memories of the production published in a local newspaper around 1906 confirm that the all the participants other than Muscroft and Taylor were residents of Indianapolis. The writer claims that "200 veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, assisted by over 100 ladies of the city" staged the 1868 Indiana production "for the benefit of the widows and orphans of deceased soldiers," while the Ohio production mentions no such charitable ends in its program.[52] Local veterans also played the role of Uncle Joe, a blackface character who loyally held the hand of his dying ex-master on the battlefield [see image 9 & 10]. In Sandusky, a ticket to the gallery was 25 cents, and 50 cents for general admission – the Indianapolis production was more expensive and seemingly more spectacular in terms of its large amount of participants. Admission for the Indianapolis show was 50 cents, with private boxes for $5 and reserved seats at 75 cents.[53] These ticket prices were within the means of most middle-class households: though these productions clearly did not cater to the lower income bracket such as the later ten-twent'-thirt' shows, prices were not so high as to prohibit entrance to many middling sorts.

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[50] Volpe, "Cartes de Visite Portrait," 168.
[51] Programme, *The Drummer Boy*, Sandusky, Ohio, 1868. Papers of the Barney, Cooke, McClew and Neilson families, 1820-1095, Accession #7786-x, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA. The Sandusky production ran from June 2-4.
[52] The women playing the female roles are not identified by name in either of the materials for the production, suggesting that the women were somehow secondary in terms of authenticating the narrative and suggest some latent anxiety about women performing onstage.
[53] Just as a means of comparison: many skilled job workers (bricklayers, carpenters, painters, plumbers, etc.) in the Northeast region earned between $3-$3.90 a day in 1868. Farmers earned $1.50 in comparison. Many theatre tickets in the 1860s/70s in New York City were between 50 cents and $1.50. See Scott Derks, ed., *The Value of a Dollar: Prices and Incomes in the United States, 1860-1989* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1994), 11-18.

Image 1. Robert Gordon, Union veteran. The following pictures were taken at a local studio (thought to be Gordon & Wilson's Indianapolis Photographic Temple of Art). These images were presumably taken in the period during (or immediately before/after) Samuel Muscroft's visit to Indianapolis to direct his play with the local GAR and other citizens at the Metropolitan Theatre, June 10-20, 1868. Images 1 through 11 were re-sized to fit the page and are from the Robert Gordon Album, c. 1868, 1906. Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, P0474, William Henry Smith Memorial Library. Courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN.

Image 2. Robert Gordon as Tom Elliot, a farmer "going to town to enlist." Many of the GAR plays presented "common men" of the land and farmers' sons as the heroes; recruitment scenes were standard. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 3. Robert Gordon as Tom Elliot in his Union soldier garb. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 4. At no point does a masquerade appear in the script, nor was it mentioned in the reviews of this Indianapolis production. It is unclear if this was part of the show at all, or if Mr. Gordon was taking advantage of his time in a studio. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 5. Robert Gordon as Tom Elliot, wounded at Shiloh. The only representation of Shiloh is actually in act III (not IV), and Tom Elliot's character had no speaking lines, nor was he mentioned in the stage directions. It is plausible that the stage was littered with bodies for affect during a battle tableau, often mentioned in newspaper reviews and scripts. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 6. Robert Gordon as Tom Elliot in Andersonville Prison (act IV in the play-text, unless another act was added to this production). Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 7. Robert Gordon as Tom Elliot, returned home/on furlough (presumably at the end of the war, as it is in "Act 6"). His friend Mart Howard (played by Muscroft) did not make out as well, and had lost an arm upon their return home in the play. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 8. Tom Elliot (Robert Gordon), Mart Howard (Sam Muscroft, playwright/director), Johnny Howard, the drummer boy (Master Eugene Taylor), and Will Smith (Lafe Robinson). Johnny is murdered by one of the "rabid" Confederates in the prison during this scene. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 9. Uncle Joe (played by Capt. Harry McMullen) and Frank Rutledge, Jr., (W.D. Jobson) before the war. Junior turns out to be the villain of the play. His father recants his Confederate leanings and Uncle Joe holds him as he dies on the battlefield. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Image 10. In Act II, Joe has a line resembling this one in the script, but the context is completely different: Rutledge hauls a disguised Mart Howard (the Union hero) before his CSA comrades as a spy, and Mart tells Uncle Joe: "don't, as you value your neck, recognize me now." Joe replies, "dis chile ain't done forgot eberyt'ing yet," but does not reveal Mart's identity. Joe has no gun throughout the play, even when he threatens Rutledge and steals some Confederate orders to give to the Union side: images of the paper scene are also included in this album. Muscroft, *Drummer Boy*, 18. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

Overall, whether in amateur or professional houses, the business of staging Civil War memories was profitable. While various sources have identified nearly eighty titles published for Northeastern and Midwestern amateur and professional stages involving the Civil War, more could have been published and performed to regional audiences by amateur local actors. But to cater to the largest possible market – both in terms of class and political inclinations – the sites of memory created as amateur productions in the late nineteenth century could not compete with the touring commercial shows in terms of spectacle or sectionalist content. Even when there were blatant reunionist tendencies within the heavily pro-Union sentiments of the amateur plays, those pro-Union ideas and any bloody shirt rhetoric made these productions biased in the eyes of Southern audiences. But the touring stage productions of plays like *Held by the Enemy* (1886)*, Shenandoah* (1888) or *The Heart of Maryland* (1895), in terms of politics (or seeming lack thereof), spectacle, aesthetics, *and* bourgeois notions of gentility, lent themselves to productions north and south of the Mason-Dixon line.

Both the amateur and commercial productions of Civil War memories were part of several larger cultural processes then: of creating theatre for leisure entertainment and displaying class identities, producing sites of war memories, and investing time, labor, and capital into particular representations of class and history. The patterns of consumption – namely, what audiences and reviewers might have witnessed, endorsed, or discarded – within these sites of memories will be the focus for the remainder of this chapter; what theatre-goers and reviewers demanded, expected, paid for, and consumed in terms of Civil War memories.

Sites of Authenticity & Melodrama

As mentioned above, veteran and playwright Sam Muscroft took his production of *The Drummer Boy* to Sandusky, Ohio in June of 1868. The town happened to be near the summer

home of Jay Cooke, who has been referred to as "*the* financier of the Civil War."[54] Laura Cooke, a daughter of the Philadelphia banker, noted her reactions in the margins of a program during the show.[55] After writing about her frustration at the music's start only minutes before the show (as well as jotting down when she took a nap during Act II), the spectator responds to the violence of war depicted by veterans in Muscroft's production.[56] In Act IV, on the corpse-strewn battlefield of Shiloh, a Southern patriarch dies and renounces his loyalty to the Confederacy as his ex-slave Uncle Joe bemoans "Massa" Rutledge's fate: "he done turned rebel, but he was a good Massa to me."[57] Closing the act is a tableau of the decoration of soldiers' graves, which would become a major rite of mourning in the US.[58] It is here that Cooke responds to the production in an intriguing (and problematic) way. She scribbles in the space available at the close of the act's listing: "Too awfully sad + true to life – heart breaking," and then points out later when her theatre companions (including her brother Jay, it seems) began to cry upon the depiction of the drummer boy's death in Andersonville in Act V [see image 11]. This reaction begets several questions: what did Cooke, a mere twelve years old at the war's outbreak, the upper-class daughter of a wealthy financier, know of the "truth" behind war? What battlefield scenes had she witnessed first-hand to attest to the authenticity of this tragedy? And, assuming

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[54] M. John Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble: The Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux, and the Panic of 1873* (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 3. Jay Cooke was originally from Sandusky, Ohio, and he purchased and built this summer home during the Civil War—during which he made extraordinary profits. He had "conceived and managed the sale of over $1.6 billion in federal bonds to hundreds of thousands of investors, all without a whiff of scandal," though this unimpeachable business character was not to remain so after the war. See Lubetkin, 3.

[55] Programme, *The Drummer Boy*, Sandusky Ohio, 1868. Papers of the Barney, Cooke, McClew and Neilson families, 1820-1095, Accession #7786-x, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA. Laura was one of eight children. See Ellis Oberholtzer, *Jay Cook: Financier of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, 1907). From a comparison of the handwriting in the program to that in other letters from Laura, it seems almost certain that she is indeed the author of the comments.

[56] The advertised Great Western Band began playing at "4 min of 8. music commences. we are quite tired of waiting + are glad – it makes me sad + dear knows I am sad enough already without that." She also thought that the portrayal of the Goddess of Liberty in the closing act I tableau was "charming."

[57] Samuel Muscroft, *The Drummer Boy; or, The Battle Field of Shiloh* (Mansfield, OH: L.D. Myers, 1872, c. 1868), 23.

[58] See especially chapter 1 of David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), and Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

Image 11. Cast as detailed in image 8. Johnny the drummer boy is shot by Frank Rutledge in prison in the play-text, contrary to the caption. It is not surprising, considering the short time period the production occurred and the chaos that probably entailed coordinating hundreds of locals, that Robert Gordon might have mis-labeled things—or that Muscroft might have changed aspects of the play. Of course, these pictures were taken in a studio, so this is clearly not an exact representation of the stage performance—though some of the tableaux and costumes were undoubtedly similar. Indiana Historical Society, P0474.

that she had not *actually* witnessed the overwhelming carnage of the war, what had she seen and heard that led her to believe that this dramatic representation of battle was indeed "true to life"?

This interest in the "real" was part of an emergent cultural fascination in late nineteenth-century America, and Laura Cooke's interest in the "true" aspects of the war speaks to the consumption of Civil War depictions on a larger scale. Miles Orvell identifies a "culture of imitation" and the "manufacturing of illusions" in the late nineteenth-century—linked into the mechanization of culture, and prior to the advent of modernism's promotion of "authenticity."[59] The reconstruction of "true" war narratives in popular print would continue with the "personal war sketches" of the 1890s, a spate of histories in the decades following the war, and memoirs of soldiers and generals.[60] Each story, encoded with silent claims to veracity, entered the fray over the war's cause(s) and meaning(s), as the battle to determine what the war was actually *about* was in its formative years, while also catering to the "culture of imitation" and the public desire for realistic-seeming constructions of the war.

Popular theatre produced offerings to meet the demands of its audience as it "catered increasingly to a taste for lifelike imitation that floated easily over the border between life and art." [61] Orvell further identifies this as an "excess of…theatrical representations," such as "real horses used to enact battle scenes."[62] Amateur theatre productions of the period did not boast the resources to create a spectacle with these authentic gestures—like Sheridan's horse in Bronson Howard's *Shenandoah* or the elaborate telegraph room that William Gillette dashed about in during his own *Secret Service* (1895). The number of sites of memory generated by amateur theatrical productions of Civil War memory far exceeded those of commercial theatrical performances until the 1880s, and many of these amateur productions were still revived into the

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[59] Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), xx.
[60] McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 21.
[61] Orvell, *The Real Thing*, 34.
[62] Ibid.

twentieth century. These amateur productions – often described as "allegories" in their titles or in reviews – catered in other ways to the taste for "lifelike imitation."

It is true that these amateur dramas were part of a larger trend in popular depictions of the war that represented the Union triumph within the rubric of allegorical Christianity.[63] Newspapers printed allegorical pictures alongside political cartoons, and postbellum monuments relied on the visual language of allegory heavily – personifying "Justice," "Liberty," the "slave," the various regions/states, etc.[64] Novels utilizing Christian allegory continued to be written and widely read well after the sentimental deployment of such allegorical devices in the hands of Harriet Beecher Stowe.[65] Tableaux, as allegorical depictions of historical events, were incredibly popular both during and after the war and were inserted into a variety of performances (such as concerts, spectacles, and stage plays) in what Willard Welsh likens to "patriotic pageants."[66] Welsh compares many of the GAR plays to the "symmetrical organization of a pageant" and also points out the allegorical "use of symbolic figures" like "the 'color guard,' the 'drummer boy,' the 'volunteer,' and the 'Union prisoner.'"[67] Rosemary Cullen also notes this allegorical repetition, referring to these military chronicle plays as "virtually indistinguishable retellings of the events of the Civil War, and featured a number of obligatory scenes."[68] The recurring personification of ideals such as "liberty," the allegorical representations of several

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[63] In her discussion of the artistic debates surrounding the decoration of the capitol building, Martha Banta describes "America's late-nineteenth-century love affair with the mural" as a "pact made with that most suspect of artistic modes, the allegory." The mural is just one of many forms that displays the popularity of allegory as an artistic mode at this time period. See Martha Banta, *One True Theory and the Quest for an American Aesthetic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 174.
[64] For various descriptions of allegory being deployed in monuments and newspapers respectively, see Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Mark E. Neely and Harold Holzer, *The Union Image: Popular Prints of the Civil War North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
[65] For more on Stowe's use of allegory in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* see Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For more on allegory in other fiction concerning the war, see Elizabeth Young, *Disarming the Nation: Women's Writing and the American Civil War* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[66] Willard Welsh, "Civil War Theater: The War in Drama," *Civil War History* 1, no. 3 (September 1955): 262.
[67] Ibid., 262-3.
[68] Rosemary L. Cullen, *The Civil War in American Drama Before 1900: Catalog of an Exhibition* (Providence: Brown University Library, 1982), 24.

other characters, and the inclusion of tableaux clearly aligns these plays with the allegorical tradition dating back to medieval biblical performance.

Jeffrey Mason tends to focus solely on these allegorical elements in his rendering of the amateur dramas. He notes that later commercial dramas were "built…on the fundamental conventions of Civil War melodrama as their predecessors [the GAR dramas] established them," regardless of whether or not commercial dramatists had seen these productions or read the texts.[69] While there are certainly connections that can be made between the amateur and commercial plays in terms of dramaturgy, I profoundly disagree with Mason's immediately following claim that these plays lack elements of realism. Mason claims that these "crude attempts" at plays "were in fact endeavors to create completely unequivocal allegory." Many of these plays are indeed allegorical as mentioned above, but they do not exclude elements of realism. Mason goes on to argue that

> realism trades on its ambiguity, but those designing the veterans' myth sought absolute clarity in their (re)construction of events and participants, and the meaning they hoped to impart. A realistic technique would have confused the message, so the playmakers, like the temperance dramatists before them, employed exegetical representation to deliver the most explicit possible message.[70]

Here Mason is operating under his assumption of the inability to reconcile elements of allegory, melodrama, and realism – the GAR amateur dramas were indeed cobbled from these three genres. Thomas Postlewait deplores the trend in scholarship that insists upon parsing out melodrama from realism.[71] As he argues, there are "numerous joinings of melodramatic and realistic forms and functions," and – in the case of these Civil War plays – it is not helpful to think of them as separate categories or to look at them as part of an "evolutionary development"

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[69] Jeffrey Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 162.

[70] Ibid., 163. Certainly the incorporation of actual veterans in many of these performances complicates Mason's claim quite a bit here. Often, I will refer to these plays as "melodramas" simply because they do adhere, by and large, to the conventions of popular melodrama that Peter Brooks set forth, but this does not mean that these plays and their productions to not incorporate elements of realism or that the two are somehow diametrically opposed.

[71] As Postlewait points out, this tendency often leads to claims that Eugene O'Neill is the first American playwright and endorses the view that drama pre-O'Neill is not worthy of academic study.

per se.[72] Linda Williams likewise argues that "melodrama borrows from realism but realism serves the melodrama of pathos and action," concluding that there is a "history" of "mutual borrowings and lendings of the two forms."[73] GAR amateur plays were still being written and produced often into the 1890s, when the realistic commercial melodramas of Howard, Gillette, and others were successful. Even as the widespread popularity of the GAR dramas dwindled alongside the decline of bloody shirt Republicanism, the GAR was still producing plays into the twentieth century.

Mason's aforementioned interpretation of realism in the GAR plays is restricted to a very specific and limited development within theatre historiography, which then causes him to ignore the other claims to the "real" that are present in the amateur and commercial Civil War plays: claims which lie at the crux of the conflicted nature of the Union vision and the more appealing logic of the reunion one. While the playwrights might have sought a clear political message, the interpretation of those politics – especially when presented with various claims to authenticity – becomes much more problematic and indeed ambiguous at times. Repeated testimonies to representing the "real" war are embedded in the amateur productions, textually, in promotional materials, and in performance, all of which belie Mason's move to discount the aspects of the "real." The amateur dramas feature affirmations of historical accuracy, which was only reinforced by the authorship, dedication to, and/or performance by veterans of the conflict. In the first few pages of the extant copies of many of these GAR-related or amateur plays, there is some kind of dedication, testament of veracity, or an explicitly stated link between the author and the war that "authenticates" that particular dramatic representation of Civil War memory. Even if referenced as "allegories," many facts of the war are given deliberate attention, and there

[72] Thomas Postlewait, "From Melodrama to Realism: The Suspect History of American Drama," in *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Drama*, eds. Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 54.
[73] Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 38.

is seemingly an anxiety over authentication of historical particulars.[74] Some ads highlight the role of GAR posts in the production, or, as one for *The Union Spy* appearing in San Francisco in 1891, claimed, the performance was "a most wonderful experience unanimously indorsed by the G.A.R."[75] Others are simply dedicated to a GAR post, as if this dedication in and of itself was a confirmation of the reality presented in the play text.[76]

In addition, some of the scenes – particularly battle scenes, drill scenes as the recruits are prepared, camp life, or the filthy conditions of the Confederate prison – fed into the need for "lifelike imitation" and allowed the audience a glimpse into authentic military life. A review for an amateur benefit production of *The Drummer Boy* at Chicago's Opera House suggests that it is "based upon familiar scenes in the life of a soldier."[77] Many other reviews likewise point to the realistic trappings of a soldier's life that appeared in GAR productions: camp songs, orders, detailed battle maneuvers, sign/countersign rituals, etc. Many of these elements were apparent in the play texts themselves, but in many productions (whether amateur, semi-professional, or professional) guards were apparently included to bestow a more pronounced authentic experience. When *In the Enemy's Camp* appeared at the Holiday Street Theatre in Baltimore in June of 1895, a reviewer was thrilled by the 4th Regiment of the Baltimore National Guard, which "marched upon the stage in great shape last night during the third act." This "novel spectacle of real militia upon the stage" made the audience demand that they "march back again,

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[74] Stedman tells the readers/producers of *The Midnight Charge* that "the scene and events mentioned in the dialogue are all correct war history, even to dates, and are backed by the best histories of the late rebellion, and many old soldiers, when witnessing its rendition, will recall to mind the events mentioned." See *Midnight Charge,* 2. A letter from General John Corse – who fought in the real battle of Allatoona and is a character in the play of that name – affirms that the battle was "very correctly represented," and the authors avow that "many of those who were prominent in the battle…pronounce it as not only deeply interesting, but, so far as consistent, *historically* correct." Judson Kilpatrick and J. Owen Moore, *Allatoona* (New York: Samuel French, 1875), 4.

[75] Classified Ad 9, *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 6, 1891, 8.

[76] Of course, these testaments appear more often when the play was not authored or co-authored by an actual veteran.

[77] "Amusements," *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1870, 4.

even though it interrupted the progress of the play."[78] A production of *The Drummer Boy* by amateurs at the Chicago Opera House was said to have "very neat and skillfull military" drills.[79] *Newbern, or the Old Flag* produced by the Dushane GAR Post in 1887 featured "an exhibition drill by Dushane Post Guard" which "elicited much applause." Every night during the week-long run, various companies from Maryland regiments would compete for a $50 prize awarded to the group displaying the best execution of military drills.[80]

The attempts to recreate military life also led to representations of various Civil War historical figures in the amateur dramas. Generals Grant and Lee appear in scenes of *The Union Spy*.[81] Along with John Corse, *Allatoona* includes Generals Sherman and Slocum, *The Spy of Atlanta* both Generals Sherman and McPherson, and *The Midnight Charge* lists General Geary in its cast. The smuggling in of historical figures endows the play texts with another layer of "reality," implying that the fictional characters inhabited a real historical world and giving even the fictional characters a semblance of actual soldiers. Though a handful of these plays contained historical figures, many more mention actual battles or physical sites related to the war. Imprisonment in Libby or Andersonville – the notorious Confederate prisons, where 30,000 Union soldiers died – occurs in many amateur plays.[82] Again, these elements of realism – military exercises/life, the inclusion of actual drill regiments on stage, depictions of prison life,

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[78] "Militia on the Stage," *Sun*, June 6, 1895, 8. It is unclear if the actors that appeared in this particular drama were amateurs or professionals, but the 4th Regiment presented clearly amateur members on the stage.

[79] "Amusements," *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1870, O4.

[80] "Public Amusements," *Sun*, January 18, 1887, 4.

[81] Grant paces, smoking a cigar, and entrusts a spy mission to a fictional character, while General Lee tries to sway the same spy to divulge information and save his own skin. Lee then proceeds to give lengthy and exhaustingly detailed military instructions. These instructions last a page and a half in a thirty-two page script, to give a sense of the length of this speech. The hero, at that point, has been condemned and left the stage—the entire speech is simply the general giving meticulous directives to his staff. The two commanders meet again in the final scene, with the aforementioned spy now a colonel in Grant's staff, at Appomattox Court House. Lee attempts to give his sword to his "magnanimous conqueror," but Grant tells Lee that his "intrepid courage challenges my respect and admiration, and I allow you and your officers to retain your side arms." L.W. Osgood, *The Union Spy; or the Battle of Weldon Railroad* (Woburn, Mass.: Parker's Amateur Player), 32.

[82] Benjamin Cloyd also details the truly staggering numbers that died in prisons overall—almost a tenth of the total war deaths occurred both in Union and Confederate prisons. See Benjamin G. Cloyd, *Haunted by Atrocity: Civil War Prisons in American Memory* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 1-11.

historical figures as characters, the representation of genuine battles and testaments of historical accuracy – all point to the desire to achieve an "imitation of reality" on the part of amateur playwrights, producers, and performers.[83]

The most problematic aspect of these inclusions of realistic aspects is that these productions were also lending political credence to specific causes of the war and representations of Confederates, women, and Othered characters therein. Explicit claims to representing aspects of reality tend to smuggle in implicit claims to particular ideologies: in this case, constructions of gender, race, and ethnicity built upon stereotypes and exclusionary principles are implicitly endorsed – as will be explored below.

While the "real" aspects of the commercial melodramas are of a different variety than those in the amateur dramas, there are still political ideologies that can be teased out of these representations. In fact, reviewers and the wider national public seemed to appreciate the surface depoliticizing of the war and the removal of sectionalist claims.[84] A reviewer of Gillette's successful *Held by the Enemy* at Chicago's Grand Opera House in 1887 notes how Gillette deviates from the prior offerings. After the reviewer summarizes the often redundant plot points of the GAR plays, he notes that "it has been hard to convince a host of dull dramatists that the War is a fact, not a fiction, and that a fact which gives pain cannot be manufactured into a fiction which gives pleasure." The "fact" of the war must be treated "modestly and not ambitiously, with reference to some of its picturesque features but *without dealing with its historical significance*."[85] Though removing this "historical significance," the commercial melodramas instead incorporated elements more traditionally aligned with the genre of realism: live animals,

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[83] Many of the commercial plays also mention real historical figures, but there were not buried claims to historical accuracy. For instance, Stonewall Jackson appears as a character in *Barbara Frietchie* (1899), but Clyde Fitch had clearly manipulated history and the Whittier poem well beyond any claims to historical accuracy.

[84] The play was not only popular in the United States, but around the world, apparently: a production took place for a delighted audience in India. "Held by the Enemy," *Times of India*, July 29, 1889, 5.

[85] "A Picture of the War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 11, 1887, 5.Emphasis mine. The reviewer does not mention any particular GAR dramas by name, but the listed elements are familiar from many of the plays.

elaborate and detailed sets, and more psychologically complex characters (when compared to the GAR dramas). The removal of historical significance coincided with a de-sectionalizing of the war – such as the orgiastic "love feast of reconciliation" that constituted the dominant mode of Civil War memory-sharing towards the end of the century. [86] But the politics bred by these love feasts were far from neutral. Patrick Kelly tracks the decline by 1896 of the bloody shirt Republican, who for many postwar decades drew Northern votes with rhetoric that "dramatically recalled the suffering of Union soldiers…in the struggle to save the nation."[87] Certainly, if the glorification of the Union cause could no longer draw votes, it would not be able to draw audience members to a theatre as profitably as it once did either. The success of reunion plays on the commercial theatre market towards the end of the nineteenth century confirms this overall cultural shift towards the reunion narrative. The theatrical blend of realism and melodrama that popularized the reunion vision rather than the Union cause onstage was part of the politics of forgetting. This forgetting created a depository for those causes and agents that the reunion narrative had to exclude in order to allow for the restoration of a melodramatic "space of innocence."

The Politics of Forgetting

The most successful stagings of Civil War memory did not deal with the historical significance of the war in any fashion. The war was indeed a fact, but the details were altered by certain productions/playwrights for commercial appeal. Aleida Assmann notes that the "highly selective" characteristics of memory also entail active and passive forgetting. Passive forgetting on a cultural level results in "objects [that] are not materially destroyed; they fall out of the frames of attention, valuation, and use." Active forgetting is "intentional…trashing and destroying," and these acts can be "violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or

[86] Stuart McConnell found that there were around twenty Blue-Gray reunions with GAR involvement in the 1880s, with the "love feast" in full effect by the mid-1890s among white Northerners and Southerners. See McConnell, *Glorious Contentment,* 190.
[87] See Kelly, "The Election of 1896," in *Memory of the Civil War*, 180.

persecuted minority."[88] Just as Jay Winter suggests, there is a "business of remembrance," but there is also clearly a "business of forgetting."[89] This business of forgetting was both passive and active in Civil War memory plays on the commercial and amateur stage: the virulently patriotic rhetoric of preserving the Union that dominated the amateur GAR plays became a somewhat plaintive and pathetic wonderment along the lines of "why can't we just all get along?" in the successful commercial dramas.

Clarifying and elaborating upon what is meant by "Union" and "reunion" vision will help foreground the dramaturgical forgetting that occurs in the commercial dramas. The Union cause as described most recently by Gary Gallagher places the concept of nation and the inviolability of the nation-state as the central motivating factor of the war. Gallagher devotes an entire study to articulating the importance of "Union" in the mid-nineteenth century, a "political sense" which has since "disappeared from our [contemporary] vocabulary."[90] This refrain of "preserving the Union" is ubiquitous in the Grand Army of the Republic dramas written by/for their posts for charitable purposes. These amateur productions implicitly endorsed a particular view of the war (i.e., the Union cause) by using the very bodies that fought *in* that war to convey a sense of history. In *Allatoona* secession is a "monster,"[91] and the hero of *The Dutch Recruit* says he will "defy you or any force you can bring to force me to raise a hand against the glorious old Stars and Stripes."[92] The patriarch of *The Drummer Boy* tells his southern visitors that "our only hope is in the perpetuation of our Union. A division or secession, call it by what name you will, is disastrous."[93] The Union Cause even acquires divine providence as a Southern loyalist in *Our Heroes* declares that "This country ain't going to be divided, no how – for God has made it

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[88] Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH &Co., 2010), 97-8.
[89] Jay Winter, "Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, 65. Winter makes reference to the "business of remembrance" only. I am arguing that there is likewise a "business of forgetting."
[90] Gallagher, *The Union War*, 3.
[91] Kilpatrick & Moore, *Allatoona*, 9.
[92] J.T. Vegiard, *The Dutch Recruit; or, The Blue and Gray* (Clyde, OH: A.D. Ames, 1879), 15.
[93] Muscroft, *The Drummer Boy*, 8.

the grandest country on the face of the earth!" While he speaks, a tableau of the goddess of liberty, with the U.S. flag, children, and loyal Unions soldiers opens before the Confederate recruits.[94]

However, the ease with which the Union vision morphs entirely into the reunion vision is also displayed in these pieces. Amidst the touting of bloody shirt rhetoric, these productions often look forward to the utopian white reunion that will characterize the commercial melodramas of the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries. The view of republicanism that the GAR proposed was that of a "virtuous nation" that had "come through the war purified of the blot of slavery and ready to lead the rest of the world into the sunshine of universal democracy."[95] In these renderings the abolition of slavery was an added bonus of the war's conclusion, not the primary motivating factor. In fact, slavery is not directly cited as a cause of the war in the GAR plays: tableaux repeatedly allegorize "liberty" or "democracy" as a goddess, rarely featuring those who would be emancipated by the war's close. In *Allatoona*, the Southern heroine invokes slavery and asks if the Northern hero will do "the bidding of a lot of fanatical abolitionists" who "want only to slay her people." She asks, "is it natural we should like a people who inaugurate expeditions like John Brown's, and send them among us to incite our slaves to murder and to deeds far worse?" The hero can only offer his patriotism as rebuttal, side-stepping the topic at the heart of her accusations: "Helen, I have always endeavored to avoid this subject when speaking with you. A true soldier knows but one people, one government, and one flag."[96] The Southerner in the first scene of *Lights and Shadows*, leaving his New York sweetheart to go fight, says that he will "assist my people in chastising these insolent abolitionists." The Yankee who looks to take his place says that his "sentiments…are to defend

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[94] John B. Renauld, *Our Heroes* (New York: Robert M. De Witt, 1873), 17.
[95] McConnell, *Glorious Contentment,* 192-3.
[96] Kilpatrick and Moore, *Allatoona,* 9.

the old flag, and to assist in putting down the rebellion."[97] Even in postwar representations, it is implied that abolitionists were radicals, since the heroes never adopt anti-slavery rhetoric.

When slavery does enter the dramatic conversation amongst the hero figures, it is not addressed as a direct cause of the war but as a jab at Southern "honor" or masculinity. John Brown is invoked again at the opening of *The Union Spy* (1871), as a Southern student accuses his Northern colleagues of being "Northern abolitionists and John Brownites." When his Northern counterpart says it was a "fair election" and they should honor the outcome, a more heated argument ensues. The Northern Sleeper argues for a country "not…blighted with the black curse of slavery," but points out – as a deeper insult to his Southern companions – that it is a slavery where "*chivalrous* Southerners debauch your servants and sell your own children. What chivalry!" The enraged villain can only counter that the Yankees used slaves "as long as it would pay, and when it wouldn't, you sold them to us."[98] As the encounter comes to blows, vows of revenge, and stomping on the Confederate flag, the Northerners lapse back into saying that the "bleeding country needs our help" to restore the Union.[99] In these scenarios – as in many of the GAR plays – abolition is *not* the primary aim in going to war, and the Northern heroes pointedly ignore accusations of abolitionism, often refusing to engage with this topic directly: thus, in the world of these plays, the charge of treachery on the part of the Confederacy holds more legitimate value than slavery as an impetus for fighting. A feature of the Lost Cause vision of the Civil War is the repeated denial of slavery as a motivating factor as well, linking the Union and Lost Cause visions in this respect.[100]

Ultimately the overlap of allegory, melodrama, and realistic elements in these amateur-produced sites of Civil War memories create and return to what I will argue is a restricted "space of innocence," pointing to the exclusionary nature of the Union cause, and how easily it would

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[97] Dawson and Whittemore, *Lights and Shadows of the Great Rebellion*, 6.
[98] L.W. Osgood, *The Union Spy; or the Battle of Weldon Railroad* (Woburn, Mass.: Parker's Amateur Player, 1871), 5.
[99] Ibid., 6.
[100] See Chapter 1 of this dissertation, 12.

fold into the romanticized reconciliationist narrative. Linda Williams expands on Brooks's formulation of melodrama, noting that it "begins, and wants to end, in a 'space of innocence,'" whether this is an actual space of innocence (Brooks's garden) or a "nostalgia for a virtuous place."[101] Williams declares that this space in "American racial melodrama…is typically an idealized version of the rural Southern home that at various moments in American history has been fancied by the nation as a whole as constituting our national origins."[102] Williams studies this melodramatic need for a home through multiple racial examples, including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Birth of a Nation*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Showboat,* and even the O. J. Simpson trial, exploring how these various racial melodramas grapple with and attempt to achieve this space of innocence. In examining the amateur GAR dramas, it becomes clear that this romanticized antebellum Southern home is not the domicile yearned for by the Union heroes. Indeed, this space of innocence is not necessarily just the idyllic Northern village that most GAR amateur plays begin and end with either, but it is instead the *reunited country* that is the ultimate utopian space of innocence. Melodrama functions in a way that the impediment to union – be it between lovers or other factions – must be removed. In the GAR dramas, the main impediment to achieving the antebellum space of innocence is the war itself, led by Southern aristocrats and unmasculine Confederate sympathizers, and followed by poor, misled common soldiers. The eradication of an unmasculine Confederate villain and agents of dishonor who demanded secession becomes the goal of the GAR plays, allowing for political reunion (with romantic attachments featuring as secondary unions). Supporting the Union cause at the forefront of the battle lines was a republican "citizen-soldier," a man of reason and independent thought who had a direct hand in the fate of his country.[103] John A. Logan, a politician and veteran instrumental in crafting the GAR and its ideology, determined that the "main threat to this yeoman's paradise was 'class distinction,' both in the slaveholding South and at 'aristocratic'

[101] Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White From Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 28.
[102] Ibid., 187.
[103] McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 198.

West Point" – not slavery.[104] Ultimately, the real triumph in the GAR amateur dramas is the removal of the rabid Confederates and the redemption of the white Southern misled male. Though not always depicted onstage, the re-enfolding of the white middle-class Southerner into the embrace of the unified nation is the key to reconciliation. This ensures that the space of innocence, whether the initial domicile or a reconquered Southern space and body, is firmly re-established by the play's close. Peter Brooks names this as one of the main characteristics of melodrama, which "reenacts the menace of evil and the eventual triumph of morality made operative and evident."[105] The historical fact of the Union's victory becomes a way to create a revised space of innocence, where evil has been eradicated and the "good" of the Union has prevailed: a melodramatic utopia, wedding a popular stage genre with a military chronicle play under the Union cause of the GAR and entirely ignoring the substantial changes underway in the postbellum world.

In the commercial dramas, the war is preventing the intersectional nuptial and procreative union. The opening and closing setting of the commercial melodramas is (more often than not) a Southern domicile – more in keeping with Williams's reckoning of this "space of innocence." As Nina Silber discusses at length in *The Romance of Reunion*, the idealized and nostalgic representations of the plantation South on Northern stages was associated with northern anxieties over the incorporation of America, urban life, gender relations, changing class structures, labor unrest, and a yearning to return to antebellum racial hierarchies.[106] Romanticizing the South became the antidote to Gilded Age anxieties. Southern tourism began to increase during the 1870s, promising an "association with true aristocracy, even if it often meant the remnants and ruins of an aristocratic past," as well as ensuring an "escape from the distressing uniformity and alienation of the mass consumer society."[107] The commercial dramas

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 15.
[106] See Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), chapter 4.
[107] Ibid., 69.

very often resuscitated this aristocratic past in the depiction of resurrected spaces inhabited by Southern belles. The war prevents intersectional romance, but also results in the loss of an entire way of life that is memorialized within these productions.

The existence of the American nation is further troubled by the Confederates, who audaciously attempted to set up what one GAR heroine calls an "imaginary government."[108] Nations are arbitrary and "imagined," as Benedict Anderson theorized.[109] The Confederate States of America proved that a nation can be broken, and a new one established merely by signatures and enough funding to support an army.[110] The ability to obliterate the concept of Union by establishing a new nation is perhaps the most threatening aspect of the Confederate attempts: the logic of "nation" – which was inextricably bound to the concept of "union" – is shown to be faulty. The threat to the Union posed by the Confederacy proves the fallacy of "nation" itself. While this is never articulated, it is the underlying anxiety in the Union cause, which clearly must maintain a trajectory towards reunion to re-establish the nation and eradicate all semblances of instability. To do this, the common Confederate soldier had to be restored in a juridical and social sense – both by granting him political rights and by bestowing on him a masculine sense of "honor."

Even if the GAR opposed the memorialization of the Lost Cause, the ex-CSA soldiers themselves were welcomed to the Blue Gray reunions of the 1880s.[111] This anti-sectionalist sentiment and the restoring of the ex-Confederates into the cultural fold began successfully appearing on the commercial US stage in the 1880s as well. In anticipation of William Gillette and his company performing *Held by the Enemy* below the Mason-Dixon line in November 1890, the *Atlanta Constitution* printed a northern critic's thoughts on the production:

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[108] The Northern heroine asks her Southern lover what will happen "if you should fail in establishing your imaginary government." See J.H. Dawson and B.G. Whittemore, *Lights and Shadows of the Great Rebellion, or the Hospital Nurse of Tennessee* (Clyde, Ohio: A.D. Ames, 1885), 5.
[109] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).
[110] Of course this is how the United States managed to become established in the first place, but the CSA's experiment drove home the fragility of the relatively new nation.
[111] McConnell, *Glorious Contentment,* 190-2.

> Dramas founded upon the events of the late civil war, of the character of 'The Color Guard,' 'True Blue,' 'The Drummer Boy of Shiloh,' and others of a similar type, have lost their drawing quality. They appealed too much to sectionalism and kept alive the bitter feelings engendered by the war, painted the horrors of prison pens and lost sight of the fact that there were heroes on both sides—men brave and good, women pure and patriotic…the author…[has] so equally divided the honors between the 'blue and the gray' that, whether in New Orleans or Boston, the play is certain of a hearty reception.[112]

To forgive, it was necessary to forget the "horrors" of war and the outrage of secession. The reestablishment of the space of innocence necessitated many instances of forgetting.

The desire to reincorporate the seceded Southern states into the Union entailed that the nation be preserved in perpetuity. With the passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments between 1865 and 1870, the very re-definition of who would be protected by the nation changed the juridical components of the postbellum world. In the midst of the civic and legal upheaval, there was a nostalgic desire for a fictional space of innocence and an antebellum world that no longer existed. The space of innocence on the commercial stage, while still in conversation with the amateur plays in production, incorporated more elements of realism (losing entirely the allegorical tableaux of their amateur brethren) and foregrounded the romantic narrative.[113] The roles of women were amplified in the commercial dramas, as female characters increasingly "invade" the Civil War memory play and assert their presence. The foregrounding of the intersectional romantic narrative is the distinctive feature of the commercial dramas, relying less and less on assertions of patriotism and preserving the Union, and increasingly moving into the domestic sphere – or giving women access to the military sphere.

Romancing the War

[112] "The Theater This Week," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 16, 1890, 8.
[113] The reason the amateur and commercial stages were in conversation has little to do with whether or not professional playwrights had seen the amateur GAR dramas. There was inevitably some overlap between theatre audiences.

Nina Silber makes much of the "gendered framework" of reunion drama, which was used to "represent the reunion as sentimental" rather than "offer[ing] an unqualified endorsement of these former enemies of the Union cause."[114] While there is much merit to Silber's argument – certainly in terms of the gendered framework – the question of whether or not there was an "endorsement" of the Confederates is a bit murkier in the context of commercial productions.[115] There is a reoccurring motif in many of the amateur and commercial dramas that Southerners were simply misled by the upper class aristocracy – the same aristocracy that is in turn the paradigm of commercialized nostalgia – and many of the Confederates turn out to be men of honor. The two heroes of *Shenandoah* attended West Point together, and promise that "our friendship shall be unbroken" though their war loyalties are divided: Elling will follow the flag of Virginia, while Kerchival promises to follow the flag of the nation, claiming he would disown his home state if they eschewed the "old flag." Elling can only declare: "So differently have we been taught what the word 'patriotism' means!" The two then echo an invocation of honor: "my dear old comrade, one of us will be wrong in this great fight, but we shall both be honest in it."[116] The "honesty" mentioned here also implies that Elling's loyalty to the CSA is an honest mistake, and thus manages to remove any blame from the common privates or officers in either army: it is those without honor or honesty that receive the moral brunt of blame. This prevailing notion of *honor* defines the allies and enemies in the pitched battle for political union and female bodies,

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[114] Silber, *Romance of Reunion,* 109-10.

[115] Silber initially links the gendered framework to the emasculation of the South in popular depictions of Jefferson Davis, dressed in drag in an effort to escape Union agents. Though this was an exaggeration of Davis's actual attempt at disguise, the insinuation of the feminine clothing inspired a veritable orgy of Davis cartoons, replete with petticoats. Using these sorts of instances, Silber argues that the emasculation of the Confederate male was a necessary initial step in the reunion process, eliminating the threat of Confederate men—thus leading to the lax laws regarding ex-Confederate readmission in the Reconstruction period. The same jeers of unmanliness that were directed at Southerners allowed them to be readmitted into the Union. While these earlier representations certainly do not paint Confederates in flattering light, the commercial dramas are largely forgiving of the honorable Confederate. See Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, chapter 1.

[116] Bronson Howard, *Shenandoah* in *Fateful Lightning: America's Civil War Plays*, Walter J. Meserve and Mollie Ann Meserve, eds. (New York: Feedback Theatrebooks, 2000), 345.

and it can be as easily eschewed by Northerners and Southerners alike.[117] So while the winning and taming of a strong-willed Confederate woman is very often the romantic crux of the amateur and commercial melodramas of Civil War memories, the politics at stake are quite often more ambiguous, and do at times suggest that an endorsement is at hand.

The women in these amateur plays, whether Southern women ultimately conquered by their Northern sweethearts (as in most cases), or Northerners who eschew their Confederate lovers/husbands for the Union cause, mostly serve as pawns within the game of political affiliations. These female characters eventually acknowledge the errors of their—and, by extension, the Confederacy's—ways and recognize the superiority of the Union cause. The villain of *The Color Guard* causes the heroine to make a statement, which highlights the political devaluation of women occurring in many of these plays: though he is a "Southern man in feeling…a *yes* from your lips would lead me to fight in any cause. The faintest hope of your love would make me respond to-morrow to Lincoln's call." This egregious declaration of intent is countered by the livid Lucy:

> No, sir, I despise you. Your words confirm my worst fears of your utter want of principle. I can respect the Southern people who act honestly out of their errors; but a man whose sword hangs upon a woman's word, when great principles are at stake, should not be trusted even by his friends.[118]

The very notion that "great principles" could be dictated by "a woman's word" is unfathomable to the inhabitants in the masculinist world of the GAR plays. Other amateur texts replay these scenes wherein the villain lacks masculinity, highlighting the lack of agency, honor, and emotional control – the hallmarks of masculinity.[119] The heroines of the amateur plays serve as a sort of measuring mechanism, alongside which the depravity of the Confederate villain can be

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[117] In many ways, the amateur reunion dramas exhibit the same quandary as Harriet Beecher Stowe: the villain is not merely a geographical political product, but Simon Legree is instead a Northern man with no *honor* or "Christian" moral code. Many of the amateur and professional villains (when they even exist) exhibit these same characteristics.

[118] Calhoun, *The Color Guard*, 9-10.

[119] In the same vein the villainous Confederate spy of *The Midnight Charge* is exposed as a philandering liar by his abandoned ex-wife, who has donned the nun's habit as a disguise and pleads for his life at the close of the play. The sister of *The Confederate Spy* convinces her Union lover to save her brother, and the spy himself swears loyalty to the Union before breaking down and sobbing into a handkerchief.

compared. For this reason, the women in the amateur plays are given a certain amount of agency in their devotion to the Union cause, but ultimately remain ancillary to the military focus.

As women – for both practical and commercial reasons – became integral to the dramaturgical structure and fiscal success of commercial sites of Civil War memories, the political potential for female equality was actually lessened. A survey of the major commercial dramas reveals the ongoing demotion of women as independent agents in late nineteenth century Civil War productions, while the stage time and focus on the actresses embodying these roles grew exponentially. Nina Silber's *The Romance of Reunion* will prove crucial to this discussion of returning to a gendered space of nostalgia, wherein the antebellum domestic roles were reinstated onstage. I believe that, rather than doing an exhaustive survey of *every* commercial production's embedded political nature (which will simply reiterate the rather obvious conclusion that overt sectionalist politics were minimal in these sites), it is more helpful to analyze how the female characters *work* within the coded masculine spaces of increasingly realistic melodramas. In the commercial plays the Civil War was a useful dramaturgical tool rather than the subject of dramatization, and the obstructions to establishing the melodramatic union are the loyalties demanded by the war itself. The General of Augustus Thomas's *Surrender* (1892) jokes with a fellow Confederate in response to his daughter's pleas that he release her Union sweetheart: "you'd think that prison was only a corral, for me to go down and pick out sons' in law from."[120] Rather than prisons manned by rabid Confederate avengers, even the prisons in the world of commercial plays hold the promise of romantic escape. Focusing on the masculine spaces that were produced – typically the most sensational scenes of these commercial dramas as well – allows us to see how fully reconciliationist sites were gendered.

Additionally, the spaces of innocence in these plays are more often than not imbued with the sense of nostalgia that Linda Williams articulates and are coded female – even within

[120] Augustus Thomas, *Surrender* (unpublished typescript). 1892. Performing Arts Research Collections, New York: New York Public Library, 8.

masculine environments – by the insertion of heroines into the military world. This is not ultimately a feminist deployment of power, especially considering that this invasion was embodied by professional actresses with reputations that were still questionable by society's standards. Instead, gendering the space allows for what Silber calls a "cultural recipe" with a "depoliticized assessment of the Civil War and its aftermath by hiding all political and sectional viewpoints behind the rubric of romance and sentiment."[121] Silber has argued that the conquering of the woman in commercial Civil War plays is indicative of concern about the changing views towards marriage in the late nineteenth century, and these intersectional marriages "returned women to their more traditional and Victorian role of submission."[122] Along with subjugating women, there was the additional metaphoric balm that these dramas provided, following a "cultural formula that enshrined domestic harmony and traditional femininity," the "plantation reunion drama…presented the metaphor of healing in its most direct and explicit form."[123] In most of the commercial popular melodramas, it is not only the space of innocence in the home that is celebrated, but also the gendered space of military battle.

Even the earliest (and largely unsuccessful) ventures on the commercial stage using Civil War memory exhibit this feminized space. Augustin Daly's *The Legend of Norwood* (1867) visits the New England heroines during the Battle of Gettysburg, surrounded by war detritus and ministering to the wounded. Rose is in love with the heroic Norwood boy, and Alice is smitten with a Confederate soldier whom she met before the war.[124] Not only are the women tending to

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[121] Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 110.
[122] Ibid., 117.
[123] Ibid., 106.
[124] Daly adapted the material from the serialized stories about an idyllic New England village by Reverend Henry Ward Beecher. Interestingly, one scene that did not survive publication or later productions perhaps already begins to suggest the military scenes that were acceptable to some audiences in the context of GAR or amateur dramas only and were not welcome on the commercial stage. A reviewer of the 1867 production in New York specifically deplored the "bombardment scene" of Fort Sumter which is determined a "grave mistake." Interestingly, the reviewer continues to say it is "*one of those incidents which cannot be adequately represented on any stage*." The village life was all represented with "excellent taste and effect," but the battle scene was "so bad that we really seek in vain for epithets strong enough to express our condemnation."See "Amusements: Norwood at the New-York Theatre," *New York Times,* November 15, 1867, 4. Emphasis mine. This scene was not in Beecher's original, and was clearly removed from the play-text itself later. An earlier review reveals that the scene in question was a tableau

the casualties, but the exchange that finally allows the hero and heroine to declare their love to each other also takes place amidst the dying. As the women listen to the battle and fear for their respective lovers, Alice asks an older nurse if the noise is gunfire. "Yes, child," the nurse replies, "they are at it again. The way mankind do take to fightin' is surprisin'. Its [sic] well this war came off; I think it was good for the country. Something would ha' happened if all this spunk had been kept bottled up."[125] Rose enters the fray near the camp – a place where "you women folks has no business" according to one of the male characters – to lob a shell away from the wounded.[126] It is clear that Rose also "takes to fightin'" if she must, and does indeed have "business" to tend to on the battle field. This is not to say that later GAR plays did not have female characters involved in wartime activities, but *Norwood* – in its only enduring post-premiere battle sequence – made women central to its military narrative in a very direct way. This is a trend that will continue in the commercial dramas: whereas women might on occasion intercede in the GAR plays, they are central to the commercial plays.[127]

Dion Boucicault's *Belle Lamar* (1874) was the next major commercial site of Civil War memory. The divorced heroine in this play wavers between her loyalty to her home and her ex-husband, even rejecting an offer of protection from Stonewall Jackson when the massacre of the

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set at Sumter, as a "daring soldier" attempts to climb up the batteries and remount the flag "amid the shower of balls and shells." See "Amusements," *New York Times,* November 12, 1867, 4.Neither reviewer harbored issues with the Gettysburg scene featuring the women of Norwood nursing various soldiers—a sentimentalized scene where sectionalist loyalties are minimized—but it is not clear what so angered the reviewer for the November 15th*Times*reviewer. The repulsion towards the Fort Sumter scene in particular is of interest: this is the sort of battles scene tableaux that appears in many GAR plays, and the reviewer's response—and the subsequent elimination of the scene upon publication—suggest that the scene might not have been palatable to others. Other papers were even less impressed: a San Francisco paper reports, via its New York correspondent, that Norwood "will retain but a brief existence" since, in Daly's attempt to translate Beecher's work to the stage, is "very much like making a poem out of Appleton's 'Railway Guide.'" See "Our New York Letter," in "The Daily Dramatic Chronicle" column, *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 18, 1878, 2.

[125] Augustin Daly, *A Legend of Norwood; Or, Village Life in New England* (New York: Anon. Publisher, 1867), 63.

[126] Daly, *Legend of Norwood*, 65.

[127] The very titles of the dramas convey this disparity in gender involvement: only *one* of the confirmed amateur productions references a woman in its title, whereas at least seven of the major commercial productions refer to female characters. *Lights and Shadows of the Great Rebellion, or the Hospital Nurse of Tennessee*, is the only amateur title with a female character acknowledged as being part of the dramatic action, but the professional titles include *May Blossom*, *Belle Lamar, The Fair Rebel, Her Atonement, Barbara Frietchie, For Fair Virginia,* and *The Heart of Maryland.*

Union camp is imminent. Her rejected lover – drastically different from the Confederate scorned paramour of the amateur dramas – is honorable and defects to the Union side, eventually saving the day. Belle is instrumental at every turn in the outcome of this particular battle, due to the romantic affiliations she has cultivated. While one enthusiastic reviewer attending the opening production at Booth's Theatre in 1874 declared that it was an admirable "national play," the remaining public did not seem to endorse the piece so heartily.[128] For whatever reason, *Belle Lamar* failed to inspire commercial success. The rhetoric of the GAR plays was still quite vehemently pro-Union at the time, so it might well be that – with the surrender of Appomattox not yet a decade old – audiences were still not prepared to fully embrace the strong reconciliationist themes.

This was not the case, however, by the 1880s. Undoubtedly the prominence of women in commercial dramas said just as much about the continuing professionalization of major actresses (and the acting profession in general in the United States) as it did about the sentimental appeal of these productions. The amateur players of the GAR dramas – the local town and city women who played the sweethearts of the charitable productions – had not been the focus of the production. The historical and allegorical spectacle of war memory was the drawing feature of these amateur shows, but the "realistic" acting (executed by star actresses in many instances) and the heightened production values of the commercial dramas were the main attractions. Daniel J. Watermeier also notes that there was an "attitudinal shift" in the Gilded

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[128] "Amusements," *New York Times*, August 11, 1874, 5. Managers hoped that "the play will run for seven weeks," but it closed after only a month. See "A Theatrical Opening and a New Play," *Sun*, August 13, 1874, 4. Most of the reviews were rather enthusiastic, so it can only be assumed that the paying public did not find the production as rousing as the newspaper critics. A correspondent for the *Scotsman* suggested that there were "rumors" that "the piece might provoke dangerous excitement" and reiterates that it might be "an important contribution to a strictly American drama," but then posits that these titillations are most likely be "advertising artifices, in the use of which Mr Boucicault is an adept."[128] Clearly, its success was subpar based on his past hits, like *The Octoroon* or *The Colleen Bawn*: but *Belle Lamar* was also written at the behest of John McCullough, who played the hero Philip Bligh, Belle's husband. *Appleton's Journal* suggested that perhaps the "great Irish playwright," against whom "no one has a more shrewd and far-sighted perception of the tricks and turnings of the market," perhaps "draws a distinction, in a commercial sense, between the play ordered by a star and that where pecuniary returns hinge on the intrinsic merit of the work." See "The United States," *Scotsman*, August 25, 1874, pg. 2; *Appleton's Journal,* Volume 12, no. 284, August 29, 1874, New York, 286.

Age towards acting as a profession, helped along by actors like Charlotte Cushman and Edwin Booth.[129] In fact, Watermeier stresses that the "personality actresses" of the late nineteenth century set the "prototype of starring actresses for succeeding generations."[130] Women become much greater stage entities to be reckoned with and then summarily dispatched via marital surrender in commercial appropriations of Civil War memory sites.

Though William Gillette wrote leading roles for himself, the Southern women he created invade the hospital room, morgue, and telegraph room in *Held by the Enemy* (1886)—one of the first Civil War stage successes – and *Secret Service* (1895) and are integral to the dramatic action.[131] The heroines of *Held by the Enemy* attempt to smuggle out their cousin (a Confederate spy) from the hospital, claiming he has died, when in fact he is living and breathing on their stretcher. Attempting to secure her cousin's escape, the main heroine goes so far as to promise herself to the drunken Union doctor she previously rejected—trading the implied assurance of consummation in exchange for her family's safety.[132] In *Secret Service*, Edith Varney produces a commission that saves the hero's life, right in the war department telegraph room after a struggle between men and shots fired over the sending of a missive. The unions in *Held by the Enemy* are achieved by the play's close, with the "Southern girl…held by the enemy, a willing captive to the brave Northern boy," according to one contemporaneous review.[133] The intersectional match in *Secret Service* is a bit more ambiguous: Thorne, who fails to execute his duties as a spy because of his love for Edith, is imprisoned with Edith's promise to wait for him. In fact the Union loyalists in both of Gillette's dramas ultimately compromise their patriotic missions for their romantic sentiments, not fully abandoning duty to their country, but not

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[129] Daniel J. Watermeier, "Actors and Acting," in *Cambridge History of American Theatre,* 2, 450.
[130] Ibid., 460.
[131] Gillette played the secondary lover, the Yankee reporter Beene, in the Boston and New York runs of *Held by the Enemy*. He also created the role of Captain Thorne, a Union spy, for *Secret Service*.
[132] Gillette claimed that neither of his war plays had "tiresome and inconceivable villains…in both plays, the man who carries on the opposition, is in the main, only doing his duty. And then the comedy possibilities are of a pleasing kind. The contrasts of the ingenuous young lovers in the midst of the somber and thrilling episodes of the great struggle, are, to me, very attractive." "Writing of War Plays," *Washington Post*, March 6, 1899, 9.
[133] "Held by the Enemy," *The Sun*, Baltimore, October 6, 1891, 6.

committing themselves to the Union cause either, which would necessitate the destruction of the Confederate family and friends of their Southern lovers. They remain loyal, but ineffective as soldiers. This ineptitude brought on by heterosexual love would be interpreted as a lack of masculinity (and close to villainy) in the world of the GAR plays, but here it is an expression of nobility and clemency wherein there is a "hope for a lasting union of the 'blue and the gray.'"[134]

The women of Bronson Howard's *Shenandoah* – the major success to appear soon after Gillette's first offering – declare their solidarity quite early in the play, as Gertrude admits that "you are a Northern girl, and I am a Rebel – but we are sisters."[135] Moments later Gertrude seems to have abandoned this conciliatory attitude, attempting to pass an important dispatch to the Confederate villain of the piece. Endeavors to search Gertrude for the intercept result in a comic exchange, whereby the "honorable" men are put in a fix: General Buckthorn admires the fact that Kerchival refuses to search the woman he loves and "wouldn't have an officer in my army corps who *would* obey me, under such circumstances," but also curses Kerchival's forbidding the general to search her himself: "Blast your eyes! I'd kick you out of the army if you'd *let* me search her; but it's my military duty to swear at you." The men then trick Gertrude into giving up the letter she possesses by pretending the Kerchival will be executed for insubordination.[136] Gertrude's status as a virtuous and upper-class woman prevents her body from being searched or defiled by "honorable men," but these same men will play upon her romantic attachments to subvert her political ones. To add insult to injury for the Confederate heroine, her beloved horse – who she insists was a "Rebel…his eyes always flashed toward the North" – becomes the mount of Sheridan in the play's most sensational scene, confirming that her Southern loyalties are a moot point.[137] Reviewers commented on the comic aspects of the

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[134] "Amusements," *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1887, 4.
[135] Howard, *Shenandoah*, 360.
[136] Howard, *Shenandoah*, 371.
[137] Ibid., 361. In 1894 a "new and extended version" of the play appeared at Columbia's Chicago Theater and the horses were still a large part of the draw, with "twenty-five horses upon the stage and heavy scenic backings for its stirring incidents, The Sheridan ride scene will be given with special scenic features." "Amusements," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 19, 1894, 5.

piece and that the play "contains…nothing that may justly wound the sensibilities of northern or southerner."[138] Madeline, the Northern lover of Gertrude's Confederate brother, cannot help but declare how her romantic attachments betray her patriotic ones: "Heaven forgive me if I am wrong, but I am praying for the enemies of my country. His people are my people, his enemies are my enemies." Her brother Kerchival assures her that "every woman's heart, the world over, belongs not to any country or any flag, but to her husband – and her lover. Pray for the man you love, sister – it would be treason not to."[139] In this female solidarity, women are deprived of all patriotic or civic duties, and it is only loyalty to their male protector that matters in the end: a confirmation of the ultimate submission required of women.

Indeed the other popular war dramas (if not as quite as popular as the ventures of Howard, the later Belasco, and Gillette) feature similar patterns of feminine sacrifice to secure masculine safety. *The Fair Rebel,* Clairette Monteith, dresses as a Confederate soldier to help her Northern lover escape Libby Prison "by moonlight." After he successfully tunnels out, the lovers swap coats to ensure the hero can escape, but Clairette soon "falls pierced [though not fatally] by the bullet intended for him," which garnered "prolonged applause" at Proctor's Fifty-eighth Street Theatre production in 1901 [see image 12].[140] In the attempt to aid her fugitive lover, Clairette nearly becomes an unwitting martyr to the Union cause. Though the character is not one of the main lovers, the wife of a burglar in Augustus Pitou and Edward M. Alfriend's *Across the Potomac* (1892) becomes a Union spy—set to be executed after being betrayed by her husband, she is granted a reprieve at the last moment when Lee surrenders.[141] Augustus

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[138] "Stage Tones," *Los Angeles Times* May 19, 1890, 5.
[139] Howard, *Shenandoah,* 388.
[140] "'A Fair Rebel' at Proctor's," *New York Times,* September 1, 1901, 12. The play by Henry P. Mawson, a veteran, first was performed in 1891.
[141] "Black Crook' Splendor," *Boston*, September 5, 1893, 12. Fanny Gillette (no relation to playwright William) played Madge Hanford, the burglar's wife and spy, in the 1893 Boston production, and interestingly had played the lead of Clairette in *Fair Rebel* in Boston the prior season. Though there is no extant copy of *Across the Potomac,* it seemed to resonate with audiences in terms of its spectacular battle scenes. With a hundred extras and militia members during one battle scene, one review mentions that "some military men [are] claiming that it was the most accurate and realistic pictures of the late war yet

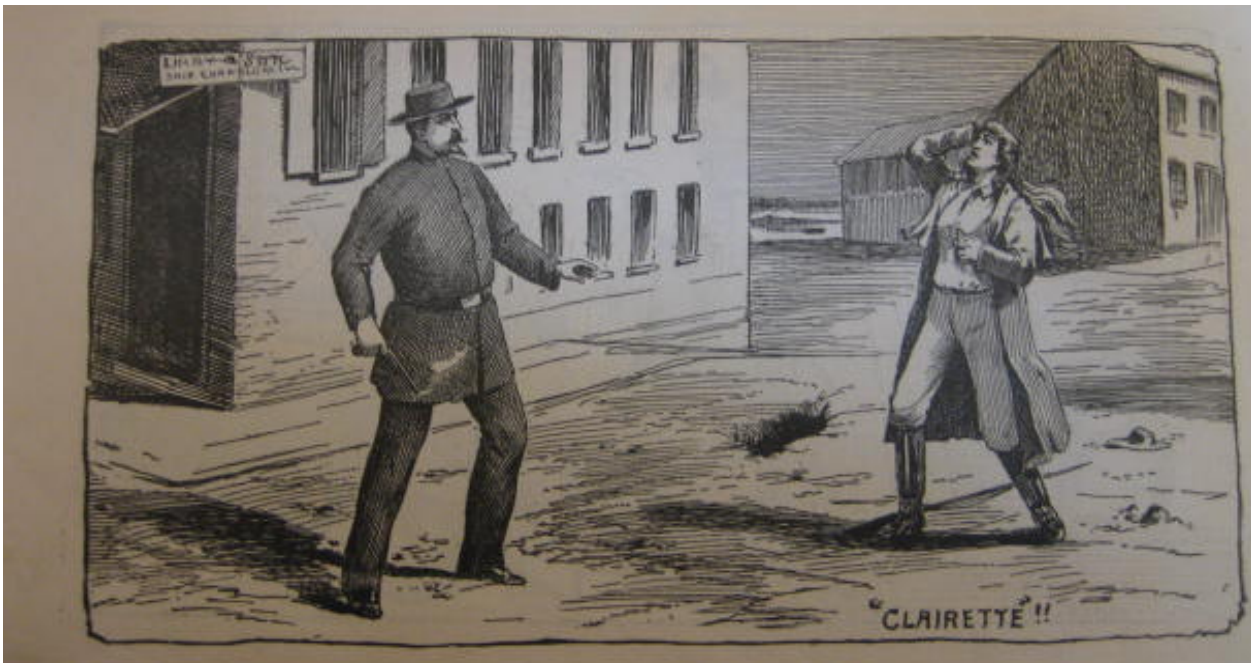

Image 12. The heroine Clairette, shot after she takes her Union lover's coat to aid in his escape from Libby prison. This image is a from a promotional pamphlet for the production, *A Fair Rebel: The Successful Military Comedy Drama Written by Harry P. Mawson*, c. 189?. Courtesy of UVA Special Collections. Image is in public domain.

presented on the American stage." See "As Other Critic's See 'Em," *Washington Post*, September 25, 1892, 14.

Thomas's *Surrender* (1892) was a comedy without the tragic elements of war, a choice that one reviewer in Chicago deplored: "the Civil War in America is essentially tragical, not comical; and it was in overlooking this fact that Mr. Augustus Thomas made his principal mistake."[142] The reviewer was horrified that the lead actor portrayed his experience at Libby Prison in a comic vein. While the play involves a conspiracy that could potentially destroy the Union army, the women of CSA General Colgate's house in Richmond are the real initiators of the action. They smuggle maps, hide escaped lovers, and are finally subjected to a mock trial, where they are absolved for all their potentially traitorous actions under the name of love. The hero of William Haworth's dramatization of the Trent affair entitled *The Ensign* (1892) fights with a "renegade American" who joins the British navy and proceeds to "dishonor…the stars and stripes," inadvertently causing the death of the turncoat [see image 13].[143] The role of Mason and Slidell and their diplomatic attempts to woo Britain and France to support the Confederacy are minimal in this version of events – the production was more "patriotic rather than sectional" in its politics.[144] His mother and fiancée seek out President Lincoln to obtain a pardon, but are unsuccessful. Ultimately "it is left to a tiny maiden" – the daughter of the boat's commander – "to move the hearts of Secretary and President." She offers "her beloved doll to the President if he will pardon the ensign."[145] Whereas the presumably pathetic entreaties of the mother and affianced fail in *The Ensign*, a mere child with a toy can sway a nation's leader. The heroine of Russ Whytal's *For Fair Virginia* (1895) is loyal to the Confederate cause and estranged from her Union soldier husband. The villain is a Scottish immigrant rejected long ago by Virginia, and much like a GAR play villain he masquerades as a Confederate, making his headquarters Virginia's home so as to relentlessly pursue her. Virginia is nearly raped for adherence to her cause, refusing to report the villain in fear that it will jeopardize the Confederate cause. She

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[142] "His Vital Mistake," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1893, 38.
[143] "The Theatres," *Sun*, Jan. 3, 1893, 6.
[144] "The Ensign," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 29, 1894, 7. Of course, it was this ability for a play to be read as "patriotic" rather than focusing on the invested Confederate hopes in the debacle that allowed productions to take place in the South and receive a full house, as reported.
[145] "The Theatres," *Sun*, Jan. 3, 1893, 6.

Image 13. Promotional poster for William Haworth's *The Ensign*. New York: Stobridge Lith. Co., c. 1894. Theatrical Poster Collection, Library of Congress. All images from this collection are public domain.

abruptly (and gratefully) falls into her husband's arms at the close of the play with the news of Richmond's fall, saying "Then Virginia must surrender too."[146] The Unionist patriarch in *Reverend Griffith Davenport* (1899) will only help create a map of his adopted Virginia for Lincoln if his Southern wife permits it. Katherine says that she followed him North against her wishes (only to see him happy), and would even "follow you into the frigid zone," but refuses to allow him to draw the map because the "patriotism" causing the war is a "delusion."[147] Davenport appeals to her sympathy for the possible future dead and declares that this mission is "a duty I owe my fellow men on both sides of Mason and Dixon's line."[148] She relents, but insists upon returning to Virginia so she can do her duty and nurse wounded men. It is clear that they will reunite after the war at the play's close: a fact doubly reinforced by the original 1899 production, when the playwright James Herne played Griffith, and his wife took the role of Griffith's Southern spouse. This litany of womanly sacrifice and loyalty throughout these produced commercial sites of memories drives home the overwhelming masculinist narrative. While it seems that the fate of the country might hinge upon the words and deeds of the women in these commercial plays, it is repeatedly *the love of her man* (a heterosexual, racially and exclusively white, and procreative love) that mainly motivates the female character, suggesting that men can ultimately prioritize country over lover in ways that women cannot.[149]

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[146] Russ Whytal, *For Fair Virginia*, unpublished manuscript. 1895, 77. One reviewer acknowledged that the "play has little to do with the actual conflict of the civil war, dealing rather more with the social life near Richmond."*Drama and Music,* Boston, January 19, 1904, 8.
[147] James A. Herne, *The Reverend Griffith Davenport* in *The Early Plays of James A. Herne*, Arthur Hobson Quinn, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 157.
[148] Ibid., 158.
[149] Other commercial productions owed more to continental European melodrama than to the particulars of the war: the story of the war is almost entirely replaced by turmoil within a domestic house. Both David Belasco's *May Blossom* (1884) and Fred Stinson's *A Divided House* (1890) (not extant) presented two honorable men battling over the same woman, with the war serving largely as a backdrop and a means to facilitate the separation of the initial couple. Both plays (and especially *May Blossom*) owe more to continental European melodrama than to any preceding Civil War plays. Both utilize Kotzebuean plot devices, where the original male lover survives despite reports otherwise, returning to claim his woman, who has since found another mate. I do not include *May Blossom* in the main part of the above analysis because the war serves only as a mechanism to remove one lover and replace another, but has very little other relevance. Belasco could have plugged in almost *any* war to create the dramatic circumstances arguably, except that this one clearly draws on a tradition of Civil War spies in larger popular culture and is set along the coast of Virginia. Several reviewers make reference to it as a "war drama," though it seems

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, two major commercial hits that served as sites of Civil War memories – Belasco's *The Heart of Maryland* (1895), and Clyde Fitch's *Barbara Frietchie* (1899) – ensured the popularity of the sentimentalized/gendered reunion vision onstage. The most famous scene of Belasco's production was also where a woman most explicitly took on a masculine role: Leslie Carter as Maryland stabs a potential rapist (and Confederate spy to boot) to death with a bayonet, and then ascends from the chapel into the belfry and, leaping, holds onto the bell's clapper so that it cannot signal the escape of her Union sweetheart. One critic declared that the production inspired lachrymose reactions. The sympathetic reaction towards the heroine, according to the critic, was the commercial *and* political power of the production. He asks the readers of the *Washington Post* to "look through the big successes of the last fifteen years, and if you can show me a single drama where tears have flowed with such alacrity…I will take off my hat to your superior knowledge." The "sniffles" that hid the tears of the men in the audience caused one Northerner to remark on his surprise when he found himself "applauding the southerners in a whole-hearted manner." As his "hands fell to his side" he told his fellow spectators, "'Well, I'm blowed! I've sat through a good many war plays before this, but I never saw one yet that could make me sit up and blubber like a baby, and give the Southerners the good hand. That fellow Belasco must be a corker!'"[150] While it certainly had its

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to present even fewer substantial connections to the war than the main examples above. Anson Pond's *Her Atonement* (1882) is one of the few commercial plays with overt references to the Civil War that does not take place predominantly in the South or portray any battle related to it. In it a jilted woman literally invades the apartment of a philanderer and murders him. When the brother of a more recently jilted woman becomes the main suspect, he joins the Union army to avoid trial – but nothing else of the war is mentioned. The play's action resumes in New York upon his return after three years of service. See "Amusements," *Washington Post,* May 9, 1882, 4. The one act after-piece *The Confederates* (1893) takes place within a Virginia house, and it also features two honorable men vying for the heroine's affections. The Union man finally sacrifices himself and takes the place of the Confederate spy (meaning he will be executed) who won her heart, in order to ensure her happiness. In these plays, the war serves as a convenient method of manipulating the exit and returns of characters within the plot rather than making overt references to the war itself in any fashion, and thus I do not include them as major examples of sites of memories.

[150] "A Playwright's Woes," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1895, 18.

detractors as well, *The Heart of Maryland* was a commercial success and significant in building the careers of Carter and Belasco alike.[151]

Clyde Fitch's drastic transformation of the wizened heroine of the Whittier poem into the young and talented actress Julia Marlowe proved that a lack of historic or source accuracy could not harm a good sentimentalized version of Civil War memory. Whereas the Whittier heroine was inspired by patriotism alone, the "new Barbara" is "prompted by…love of country in the concrete form of handsome Union officer."[152] The tragic Confederate heroine of Clyde Fitch assures her Union lover that the North and South in "1776…were betrothed. This war's a lovers' quarrel; after it they'll *wed* for good, like you and I to-day."[153] For what it lacks in subtlety, this dramatic declaration gets to the crux of the romantic reunion narrative. Barbara, like Maryland, takes on a masculine role to save her lover from the other side. When the nuptials are interrupted by battle, Barbara shoots a mercenary Confederate who is lying in wait to pick off her fiancé. As a true martyr for her love, Barbara later takes the US flag off the corpse of her dead Union man and presents herself on the balcony as Stonewall Jackson and his men march through town. Jackson expressly forbids anyone touching her after stones are thrown, but a rejected Confederate shoots Barbara and she dangles, dead, over the balcony, still clutching the flag. The grateful British actress appeared at the end of the New York run in 1900 to the sold out house, declaring in her curtain speech that "it has been a real privilege with me to appear before you as Barbara, in an American part, in an American play, by an American author, and all controlled by an American manager, Charles Frohman."[154] In the world of the play, however, the "American" nature of patriotism, as expressed by a woman, can only be done so in the sentimental confines of a heterosexual relationship rather than out the political loyalty of Whittier's wizened heroine. The promise of commercial gain via sex appeal, borne upon the

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[151] Marra, *Strange Duets*, 178.
[152] "New Barbara Frietchie," *Sun*, November 13, 1899, pg. 10.
[153] Clyde Fitch, *Barbara Frietchie, The Frederick Girl* (New York: Samuel French, 1900), 63.
[154] "Speech by Miss Marlowe," *Sun*, January 8, 1900, 9.

bared shoulders of a young beautiful actress, denied women any truly political gestures of sacrifice.

The behaviors of the women in the commercial dramas reveal a distinct disloyalty: women take up arms against their avowed country to save their lovers, transmit missives and deliver dispatches that endanger their family members who fight for a particular side, risk their chaste reputations at various turns to hide sweethearts from the other side, and even kill others (or, in the case of Barbara Frietchie, herself), all in the name of love – not love of country, but for *romantic*, Victorian, heterosexual, white, procreative love. The political agency of women is trivialized, and even the most noble heroine who inspires sympathy in even the most factionalist of late nineteenth-century hearts, be it Carter's Maryland or Marlowe's Barbara, performs her gendered role in a nostalgic space, where women are ultimately denied political loyalty and choice and tamed to sacrifice their very lives and those of their nearest and dearest for their male lover.

If the commercial reunion vision required the exclusion of white women as political participants, the role of ethnic and racial minorities as characters—and their ultimate exile from the ambiguous overlap within the Union and reunion narrative—is likewise indicative of the reunion vision's restrictive focus and the exclusionary nature of the war's melodramatic memory sites. Commercial dramas, by capitalizing on what Nina Silber has termed "the romance of reunion," sought to appeal to the greatest possible number of consumers in every geographical area of the United States (and beyond). As heterosexual romantic union seemingly becomes more central to the Civil War reunion vision onstage, racialized and ethnic characters are increasingly marginalized dramaturgically. By the turn of the century, the racial and ethnic tropes of the amateur stage have all but disappeared from the commercial dramas.

Melodrama as an Exclusionary Tale

In September of 1889, the *New York Times* ran a review of *Shenandoah* with praise that Howard "handled the war with delicate carefulness, almost gingerly."[155] Continuing with its endorsement, the paper notes that the playwright has "deftly dodged the negro question."

> One of the best things about this play is its absolute freedom from the sentiments expressed in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." At this moment they can well be spared on the stage. There is not a comic contraband or a pathetic, faithful black chattel in "Shenandoah," and nobody seemed to notice the void on the first night. It is a wonder, though, that Charles Frohman has neglected to mention this fact in his advertisements.

The choice of "comic contraband" or "pathetic, faithful black chattel" provides an accurate generalization of the black characters represented by white actors onstage in these sites of memories (both amateur and commercial), though the nuances behind these depictions are a bit more complicated. There are also multiple ethnic characters that appear in the GAR plays—stage Irish and/or Dutch characters appear in almost *every single* amateur play. While some stage Irish characters appear in the commercial dramas, the Dutch are dropped entirely. Even with the presence of ethnic or racialized Othered characters, there is a consistent pattern of these characters being portrayed as unfit for citizenship and inclusion into the Union. The remainder of this chapter will explore the complex characterizations of ethnic and racial characters in these performed sites of Civil War memories. Whether portrayed as drunken, bumbling cowards, comic types, loyal Uncle Toms, or patriotic quasi-heroes, the ethnic and racial characters easily fit into the categorical melodramatic function to banish evil: they do, ultimately, wash the performed history of the reunion vision whiter, to a native-born Anglo-Saxon hue. Brooks claims that melodrama is ultimately "radically democratic, striving to make its representations clear and legible to everyone."[156] While the legibility of melodrama is democratic, the racial and juridical politics evident within these produced sites is decidedly not.

Part of this project will avoid locating minstrelsy within the "love and theft" discourse exploring the sexual tensions with racial borrowings, as begun by Eric Lott and then pursued by

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[155] "Record of Amusements," *New York Times,* September 15, 1889, 3.
[156] Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 15.

many others. Instead, I find combining the work of Falugni Sheth, Ian Haney López, ideas of performativity presented by Michael Rogin, and Linda Williams's work on racial melodrama to be more helpful. The final part of this chapter will first provide the theoretical materials for assessing the Othered stage types, before focusing first on the inclusion of stage Irish and German/Dutch characters, then on the African American types represented by white bodies.[157]

The melodramatic appropriations of Civil War memories thus far explored in this chapter all display the complex characteristics of what Linda Williams terms "racial melodrama," or part of the "dynamics of melodrama in relation to the stories about race that American popular culture has long been telling to itself."[158] It is in the victimization of "racially beset" characters that Williams locates the process of racial melodrama, whereby the "suffering subject" articulates the "political power of pain and suffering."[159] Williams's approach does certainly apply to the permutations of Uncle Toms that will appear in amateur and commercial sites of war memories, as part of the "melodrama" providing the "alchemy with which white supremacist American culture first turned its deepest guilt into a testament of virtue."[160] Yet there are limits to Williams's study in terms of the melodramatic sites presented here though. Many of the ethnic and racial Others that appear in Civil War melodramas provide comic relief or – in the case of some black characters – provide commentary on the suffering of the white families they serve. The comic types which appear most frequently in the amateur dramas rarely display any of the pathos that Williams explores. Furthermore Williams is limiting her study to the black and white of American racial politics, but this choice falls into the larger tendency in US scholarship – especially those studies examining nineteenth-century performance – to only

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[157] These German characters were often called "Dutchy" at various points, but it is clear that these characters are indeed German and are within the tradition of the stage "Dutch" character. This type came to represent the Pennsylvania-German association of "Dutch" rather than having a Netherland origin (as opposed to, say, Rip van Winkle's appearance on the US stage). These German characters were a fixture of popular stage routines in minstrel shows and other variety stagings by the postbellum era. For an early but thorough summary of this type on the nineteenth-century stage, see Carl Wittke, "The Immigrant Theme on the American Stage," in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (1952): 211-232.
[158] Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 43.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 44.

mention minstrelsy or other forms of blackface performance on the popular stage. Indeed, there was a long history of ethnic characters appearing on the popular stage in the United States, dating all the way back to performances of *The Poor Soldier* in the early national period.[161]

More aid in unpacking these ethnic stage types comes via Michael Rogin, who in particular cites the exclusionary nature of blackface and the contingency of whiteness, whereby "blackface…loosened up white identities by taking over black ones, by underscoring the line between white and black."[162] In fact, Rogin locates the very process of Americanization within blackface minstrelsy, claiming it "founded a new nation culturally" after the Civil War "in racial wrong."[163] I would extend this assertion a step further to argue that not only blackface, but ethnic dramatic play in general serves the same function – destabilizing white identity only to ultimately reify it. This fluctuation in whiteness not only proves its constructedness, but also how other shades of white (e.g., Irish and German immigrants) can be smuggled into its borders at certain historical moments. While there are minstrel moments in these shows, they are never the centerpiece: the military narrative in the amateur plays takes center stage, while the commercial dramas favor the white intersectional romance.

Re-visiting the work of Falguni Sheth and Ian Haney López will help elaborate on the larger implications of this dramatic white-washing. Sheth examines race as a technology of the state, and she is uninterested in arguments on whether race and ethnicity are biological or social constructs. Her focus is instead on the fact that race and ethnicity are manifest in the juridical apparatus of the state, and that the technologies of race are deployed to protect and maintain sovereign power. There is, according to Sheth, a latent "violence" that "underlies the relationship among subjects, collective populations, and sovereign power," and it is this same

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[161] Of course, John O'Keeffe's *The Poor Soldier* (1783) was imported from Britain, where there was an even longer trajectory of such ethnic characters onstage.
[162] Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 34.
[163] Ibid., 17.

violence that "leads to the production of races."[164] These violent exercises are not laid out in the open, but become "hidden behind a moral discourse of inferiority, criminality, and evil."[165] This moral discourse becomes crystallized in dramatic representations of Othered characters in sites of Civil War memories. While I am deliberately approaching race, ethnicity, and gender as social constructs –as represented in these performed sites of memory in ways that oppress various minorities and women – Sheth's slant on the technological aspects of race underscores real legal repercussions that are fed by and feed into widespread mental conceptions. The violence and production of race is not only manifest in discourse, but has juridical impact, as this discourse distinguishes between "human beings qua citizens and those who cannot be citizens because they are 'not human like us.'"[166] Ian Haney López, in his groundbreaking work *White By Law*, argues that race is constructed by law, "in a complex manner through both coercion and ideology, with legal actors as both conscious and unwitting participants."[167] It is through physical, social, and material means that race is constructed as "historically contingent social systems of meanings."[168] Haney López focuses in particular on the construction and protection of whiteness, and examines the race-related cases of the late nineteenth century that were subsequently used to dictate US citizenship policies. He offers extensive evidence of the exclusionary tactics pursued by US courts: of the prerequisite cases from 1878 to 1952 wherein claimants were denied rights or segregated, all but one case fought to be identified as "white" by the courts.[169] Ultimately he outlines a vicious cycle: "through law, race becomes real becomes law becomes race in a self-perpetuating pattern altered in myriad ways but never broken."[170] Amongst the various statues that were enacted during the late nineteenth century with

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[164] Falguni Sheth, *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 24.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid., 38.
[167] Ian Haney López,*White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 13.
[168] Ibid., 14.
[169] See Haney López, Chapter 3.
[170] Ibid., 133.

deliberately exclusionary motives, Haney López asserts that all these cases prove that "racial categories exist only as a function of what people believe."[171] It is here that the danger embedded in the representations of the "Other" in popular culture becomes clearer. Popular depictions of ethnic and racial Others as inferior systematically deny the humanity of the *real* minority human being, thus protecting and reinforcing whiteness via the social and legal exclusion of the Other.

Drawing upon performance traditions of ethnic stage types that sometimes appeared in minstrel routines and in other popular entertainments, the amateur plays often relied on stereotypes to provide comic relief. Considering the demographic make-up of the GAR organization that produced many of these plays and the treatment of racial and ethnic Others in the plays, it is possible to read these productions as enacting a sort of white male nostalgia, when blacks were still slaves or were blindly loyal to the Union emancipators, and when thick-accented, bratwurst-eating Germans and drink-loving Irishmen provided ethnic humor: a space of innocence locked in antebellum racial, ethnic, social configurations, and performance traditions.[172] In the very comic tendency of many of these characters, their disorderly nature becomes plain. By the sovereign power labeling a racial or ethnic group as unruly, Sheth argues

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[171] Ibid., 103.

[172] The depiction of African Americans in amateur GAR plays is clearly influenced by the different aspects of the GAR's organizational structures and policies. While Stuart McConnell claims that the GAR was one of the most progressive organizations of the nineteenth century due to its color-blind policy of admission – and this is true in comparison to other US organizations – the GAR was by no means an all-inclusive, desegregated, democratic fraternal group. The status of African American veterans and black masculinity was in constant flux in terms of the organization, at times denying an important platform for juridical and social acceptance. Donald Shaffer reveals the gap between the policy on paper and the actual practice of the GAR, noting that many African American veterans were blackballed by admissions voting policies. Whites-only posts were established in some Southern states, and black veterans were not allowed to establish their own posts there. There were debates amongst black and white veterans as to whether or not posts should be segregated: in reality, most posts experience de facto segregation regardless of the official policy. Shaffer characterizes the status of black veterans in the GAR as the position of "second-class members," even with a few managing to achieve high positions within several posts. In addition, the GAR had its share of German and Irish immigrant members, and many posts were built around ethnic or service identities, due to the earlier mentioned tendency for certain ethnicities to remain in particular neighborhoods at the time. Since the GAR never allowed veterans of later US wars to join its ranks, the organization remained locked in a demographic stasis: there was a veritable explosion of immigration to the US towards the end of the nineteenth century, but the GAR represented the more limited diversity of decades past. See Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 158.

that these labels are naturalized as the "process…of classifying becomes forgotten, concealed or reified."[173] It is in the final aspect of the technological, tool-like aspects of race that sovereign power can "control and manage its populace" by the "transformation of the 'unruly' into a set of categories by which to divide populations against themselves – biopolitically, culturally, socially, etc."[174] Sheth posits that the peoples deemed "unruly" – in keeping with Haney López's definition of race – are historically contingent and "a floating signifier, pointing to something that insinuates a threat to the political order."[175] Ultimately those deemed "unruly" at any given moment are either excluded from the rights of sovereign power, or protected as powerless agents by it, with no real political participation in the modes of power.

In amateur-performed sites of memory, examples abound that speak to the unruliness of minority characters. These ethnic types often fight amongst each other in the plays – precluding any sort of pan-Other solidarity and betraying a penchant for unrestrained violence. In one instance the African American slave of *In the Enemy's Camp* (Neil, who is ambiguously called a "servant," as often occurs in many of these plays) hoodwinks Mike the Irishman. Neil offers to pull Mike's aching tooth, and they haggle over the price as Neil proceeds to pull the wrong tooth. Mike snatches Neil's offered Capsicum hot pepper concoction, believing it to be liquor, and then begins to dance "wildly about," shouting, "Ye ugly black divil…Be off wid ye, or by the howly St. Patrick I'll drum that black head oye's into the middle of next week."[176] Though, as mentioned above, slavery is rarely invoked as a cause of the war, the Irish and Dutch characters will invoke it in a comic vein to mask cowardice: "I vouldn't go down dere and vight mit dose niggers of you vould gife me der whole Goffermant" according to Sockery Schneidlebecker in *The Confederate Spy*.[177] Several of the Irish and German stage characters are fond of drinking, they bumble military maneuvers (an ethnic character allowed to comically and inefficiently lead a drill is

[173] Ibid., 28.
[174] Ibid., 32.
[175] Sheth, *Political Philosophy of Race*, 27.
[176] S.J. Brown, *In the Enemy's Camp; or, The Stolen Despatches* [sic] (Boston: Walter H. Baker & Co., 1889), 14.
[177] W. Ellsworth Stedman, *The Confederate Spy* (New York: Samuel French, 1887), 10.

featured in several plays) and many – particularly Herr Sockery – scavenge for food. In the midst of allegorical military plays, slapstick humor trading on deep-seating performance and cultural stereotypes were awkwardly inserted.

The most credible evidence that these Others are not truly enfolded into the Union cause is that they often do not show any loyalty to a nation state (be it CSA or USA), but – in the case of the Irish and German – can be bought as mercenary soldiers, like those in *The Color Guard*. Often Othered characters, and especially African American ones, base loyalty on a personal sense of obligation or servitude to a single character and reinforce their represented inferiority. The rare ethnic characters that express patriotism in the GAR plays, such as Dietrich in *The Dutch Recruit*, are often routinely emasculated in other ways: Dietrich falls asleep and lets a Confederate soldier escape, has to dress like a woman to aid the hero in his escape, and even his killing of the villain Frank Duncan, who is attempting to rape the heroine Maude, is rendered dishonorable. "How you like dot, Misdur Guerrillas?" Dietrich asks the dying man; and Maude tells the hero Harry, late to the scene, that she is "thankful that you did not stain your hands with his blood."[178] The ethnic stage types are repeatedly expected to perform outside the boundaries of heroic behavior, much like the rabid Confederate villains, and when they do perform potentially heroic feats, they are too bound to the stage comic traditions to be given any heroic value or recognition, and the heroic feat is often framed as a happy accident rather than the outcome of a truly masculine endeavor. Clearly, these characters afforded amateur players an opportunity for scene-stealing comic relief: reviews often mention the excellent execution by the veterans or amateurs taking on the ethnic or racial Othered roles.

The commercial success of professional staged Civil War sites of memory and the comparative reverence accorded the stage Irish character in these productions – along with the removal of the stage Dutch – takes place during a shift in immigration patterns into the United States. From 1880 on, immigrants arrived progressively more from southeastern Europe rather

[178] Vegiard, *The Dutch Recruit*, 49.

than the northwestern regions.[179] As new waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe – quite unlike their German and Irish predecessors and rendered even more "foreign" in popular discourse – came to the United States during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the rhetoric of nativism escalated in the courts and government chambers. Eastern European immigrants were increasingly the populations that had to be marked as "unruly." Desmond King discusses the influence of Social Darwinism on US immigration laws, leading to certain "assumptions about the types of immigrants and their suitability for citizenship." King also mentions the "irony" that "restrictionist politics often consisted of the most recently accepted immigrants" – i.e., Irish, German, and other northwestern Europeans – "to delay the new generation."[180] In the face of a new wave of immigrants, construed as being more unsuitable for citizenship and "stranger" or "more foreign," commercial stage depictions of ethnic types presented softer, less grotesque depictions than those on the amateur stages. As commercial stage productions most often started in urban centers – sometimes for out-of-town tryouts before moving to New York and onto the national touring circuit – the probability of northwestern European immigrants, who by that time had established a fiscal, political, and social presence going back decades within the cities, most likely necessitated a lessening of negative ethnic stereotypes to ensure commercial viability in the widest markets.

As the reunion vision gained popularity, the German and Irish stage types – portrayed as "unruly" in many amateur productions – were dramaturgically incorporated into a more embracing reunion vision on the commercial stage. I will argue that these types fall into what Sheth calls a "border population," and in doing so I am attempting to transcribe her political philosophy onto theatrical practice. The border population is a group that were "once located legally, socially and culturally outside the periphery" but move to the "periphery…which

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[179] Whereas, in 1882, only 13% of new immigrants were from southeastern Europe, the early twentieth century saw 80% of incoming immigrants from the same region. See Desmond King, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 50.
[180] Ibid., 51.

distinguishes insiders from outsiders."[181] This sub-group not only divides the population, but "serve[s] as the historical memory and institutional moral conscience that facilitates the American states' capacity to create the newest population of outcasts."[182] Ultimately, as realism was increasingly incorporated into the commercial dramas, the blatantly comic role of the German and Irish stage types diminished in equal proportion. Realistic melodrama did not of course eliminate comic types entirely, nor did they no longer serve comic purposes, but the centrality of these characters was lessened on the commercial stage. As both Haney López and Sheth echo, the construction of race and ethnicity are *always* dependent upon the historical context, and it seems clear that in the movement from amateur productions to the commercial stage there is a discrete shift in the representation of minority characters.

Again there are no stage Dutch characters – in the extant play texts or mention of in any related reviews – in commercially produced sites of memories. Irish characters, certainly a more enduring stage type in American popular theatre than the stage Dutch, appear in several of them, however. The popularity of the Harrigan and Hart plays of the late nineteenth century helped sustain the Irish characters onstage. Relevant to this study, the reuniting of two opposing Irish brothers after the war's close in their short piece *The Blue and the Gray* (1875) presented the rare combination of an ethnicized and sentimental reconciliationist site.[183] When the stage Irish characters appear in commercial dramas based upon the Civil War, they are more ennobled than their GAR counterparts and are endowed with a respectable amount of masculinity in the world of these plays. During the battle of Gettysburg, Rose of *The Legend of Norwood* nurses a wounded Irish soldier, who is a chivalrous and gracious patient. In contrast to the bumbling GAR Irish recruits, O'Stout of *At the Picket Line* (1889) is a patriotic and experienced sergeant, whipping the New England recruits into shape. The new soldiers give their sergeant various reasons for joining—one says he was "kinder sweet on a gal" and another

[181] Sheth, *Political Philosophy of Race*, 130.
[182] Ibid.
[183] The Mulligan Guard series the duo performed also ensured that the stage Irish character was consistently more visible on the popular stage.

"to see the country," but O'Stout says he enlisted because he's "patriotic." A stage Yankee responds that "most Pats are riotic," drawing on the boisterous stage tradition explored above.[184] O'Stout arrests the hero in a case of mistaken identity, but later is the voice of justice when a dispute must be settled.[185] Though in *Belle Lamar* (1874) Boucicault gave the Irish Remmy a lass to banter with and provide some comic exchanges, Remmy also refuses to relinquish the Union flag while under attack and is seriously wounded. The hero reassures Honor that "he has fallen like a man – he was worthy of any woman's love."[186] The experienced Sergeant Barket of *Shenandoah* is likewise paired off with Old Margery. Barket shows his career-long superior due respect, but Buckthorn tells him at the war's close that he's "not your commander to-day, but your comrade in arms" and that "we'll be together again in the next world," before going on to attest to Barket's military capabilities to Margery.[187] The disparity between the depictions of stage Irish characters and the omission of German ones suggests the ongoing inclusion of these types on the commercial stage. There is also the consideration of the infusion of reality and sentimentality in the commercial dramas overall, as mentioned above. A grotesque, bumbling, drunken Irish or German character – with accents so thick as to barely be understood – would not conform to the bourgeois tastes presented in the commercial romantic melodramas. There are no "unseemly" comic brawls or prolonged elaborate drill scenes conducted, disallowing the intrusion of exaggerated comic stage types.

Additionally, the re-writing of African American involvement in the war – indeed, the almost wholesale denial of black involvement in the war both in terms of the amateur dramas and especially the commercial ventures – suggests that African Americans were either deemed

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[184] Justin Adams, *At the Picket-Line* (Boston: Walter H. Baker & Co., 1893), 16. When O'Stout attempts to then lead them in drills, the stage Yankees are the ones constantly misinterpreting and bungling: the two recruits lie down on the ground when he instructs them to "rest arms."
[185] The secondary hero is sold a bottle of poison instead of liquor as part of an elaborate plot to dispatch him and take his sweetheart. This hero demands that a treacherous colleague drink it first. When the villain refuses, O'Stout insists that he drink it as well, and as he dies the villain is exposed to all. Thus, O'Stout is part of the expelling of evil from the melodramatic space of innocence. Ibid., 33.
[186] Dion Bouciault, *Belle Lamar* in *Fateful Lightening*, 324.
[187] Howard, *Shenandoah*, 393.

unruly or otherwise incapable of being part of the reconciliationist vision or the nation at large. The reviewer quoted at the opening of this section felt that it was necessary to celebrate that exile in *Shenandoah*, and sites of memory that fall within the purview of the reunion narrative tend to celebrate the loyalty and martyrdom of Uncle Toms and Mammys, or to emasculate and minstrel-ize the younger black male characters. Whether loyal Uncle Toms/mammies, comic minstrel types, or a mixture of the two, no political agency is afforded to these characters. Ultimately the black characters in reconciliationist dramas reiterate the superiority of white identity and antebellum racial codes, branding themselves as outcasts in need of protection by sovereign power. Of course it must be remembered that white players – whether amateur or professional – blacked up for these roles, already linking these performances of race to the tradition of minstrelsy. A variety of Tommer plays and minstrel shows (performed by both African American and white actors) still dominated stages throughout the country. With the war over, the abolitionism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* lost its political weight, and increasingly productions "indulged in the nostalgic glow of melodrama's 'space of innocence'" and "imbue the work with even greater amounts of nostalgia for the lost 'Kentucky' home," as Williams says.[188] These commercial and amateur sites were all played by white actors in white houses. There is little celebration over the incorporation of African Americans into the body politic.

It is telling that three of the produced amateur plays contain an almost identical scene, wherein black characters discuss their involvement in the war. In *The Dutch Recruit* (1879), Uncle Ned asks another slave, Sam, if he's going to "fite" for "your massa, missus, and de old plantation."

> *Sam*. Look heh, Uncle, you've seen two dogs fitin' ober a bone?
> *Uncle Ned*. Yes
> *Sam*. Dat's de Nof an' Souf fitin' ober us. Now Uncle, did you eber see de bone fite?[189]

[188] Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 85.
[189] Vegiard, *The Dutch Recruit*, 9.

A similar dialogue appears in *Harry Allen* (1873), but the hero Harry asks Sam, the slave of their Southern guests, if he'll enlist. Sam has inexplicably covered himself in flour in order to hide, asking "Me go for a soger? I guess not." When Harry asks why Sam will not enlist, he replies with a query:

> *Sam*. Now, look a here, Massa Harry, did you ebber see two dogs fighten ober a bone?
> *Harry*. But what's that got to do with it?
> *Sam*. Well, Massa Harry, did – you – ebber – see – de bone get up and fight?
> *Harry*. I don't remember that I ever did.
> *Sam*. I guess not. Now you boys can be dogs and I'll be de bone, dat am de innocent cause of all dis fuss.[190]

An even closer rendition of this dialogue occurs between Zeb and the Irish Ike in *Lights and Shadows of the Great Rebellion* (1884).[191] Shortly after this exchange, Zeb and Ike share a comic exchange trying to lay claim to a bottle of booze, until Dutchey shows up and also tries to steal it. The Sams and Zeb (and other young African American male characters) who could possibly be involved in the war's causes or its battles declare their innocence and absolution: as mere objects that dogs are fighting over, all the black characters are literally devoid of life and agency. Neil of *In the Enemy's Camp* says that he won't be a "sojer," and that he'd "rudder live ten year a coward, den twenty year a dead niggar."[192] Later he declares that he is "for de Union, sartin sure," but tells his white owner Madge in the same breath that he would die for his master.[193]

This dialogue both emasculates the black characters by cowardice, but also suggests that these figures cannot begin to grasp the complexities of the matter at hand. The Sams and Zeb make a declaration that the whites in these plays routinely discount – that slavery is somehow at the root of "all dis fuss." This notion is regularly cast aside in the amateur plays, and it becomes

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[190] Joseph Barton, *Harry Allen, The Union Spy* (Fremont, OH: J.M. Osborn, 1880), 10-11.
[191] J.H. Dawson and B.G. Whittemore, *Lights and Shadows of the Great Rebellion, or the Hospital Nurse of Tennessee* (Clyde, Ohio: A.D. Ames, 1885),9.
[192] Brown, *In the Enemy's Camp*, 13.
[193] Ibid., 21.

clear that it is only the misinformed black minstrel characters who have this "distorted" perception.

The comic African American types that appear often display the sort of humor and physicality typical of minstrel shows: getting into fights, participating in comic business, and often exhibiting the dialect and malapropisms of stump speeches. For instance, Jumbo in *The Midnight Charge* steal chickens, plays the banjo, brawls with Confederate villains and ethnic characters alike, and promotes his singing group the Pumpkin Blossom Club in the Union camp. The older slaves in the amateur plays inevitably take on the pathos of an Uncle Tom. Every black character, even those verbalizing the promise of emancipation, is still routinely denied the masculinity that black veterans yearned for and thus a place in the white male fraternity.

The GAR's limited corroboration of African American masculinity is crystallized in the few scenes where blacks are allowed to bear arms. Zeb – the Uncle Tom character in *Lights and Shadow* – is also Sam, a young minstrel character: disguised as two different people, he can slip in and out of various camps and houses. The actor onstage simply puts on a white wig (residual payout from the break-up of his minstrel troupe during the war, he informs us later) when changing characters, making it clear that he is doing so in a monologue to the audience. Along with the implication that all blacks are interchangeable, the sequence also suggests that all African Americans look so alike in white eyes that it is completely feasible they would be unable to distinguish individual features – denying blacks individuated agency and characters.[194] Playing into multiple other negative stereotypes, Zeb fights both the German and Irish characters for booze, holding them at gun-point to procure a bottle. The same happens when Sam/Zeb captures the Confederate villain, who encourages him to drink and seizes Zeb's weapon. The inebriated Zeb gives up, deciding instead to steal some poultry, since "Niga know more about chickens, dan dey do about war."[195] Pete in *Allatoona* exposes a Confederate plot to

[194] African American composer Ernest Hogan would turn this stereotype into the wildly popular song, "All Coons Look Alike to Me" in 1896.
[195] Dawson and Whittemore, *Lights & Shadows*, 22.

the Union general and saves the young hero. The general tells the hero that "you owe your life to this faithful negro." His ex-master swears, "curse the infernal niggers!" "Cuss away, massa, cuss away," Pete replies, "but it won't do no good, massa." The appellation of faithful is of particular importance here: still denied a name in his heroism, Pete is relegated to a "faithful negro," who has correctly transferred his loyalty to the Union. It is only once he is deemed a "faithful negro" that he is given a weapon; he appears to be a poor soldier, merely mimicking the movements of those surrounding him.

This denial of substantial masculine contribution by African Americans to the war is routine in GAR plays. The two African American characters in *Our Heroes* (1873) discuss their plans to fight in the war in the first act, but repeatedly undercut any claims to real masculinity in their exchanges. Jeff, whose "gran'-fadder fell fightin' in the reb'lutionary struggle" also fell fighting more recently (and clearly not in keeping with his heroic lineage) "when I had de row wit dat odder nigger." Jeff's participation in the war is relegated to "malufactrer of hard tack chowder for de troops."[196] Jeff and his friend Pompey continue this comic exchange, until the Stage Yankee comes in and (literally) trips them up.[197] Other African American characters are likewise granted limited participation in the war through emasculating or dehumanizing depictions. For example, Clay in *The Confederate Spy* overhears a Confederate plot while hiding under the sofa in a Southern parlor, but the Union general struggles to understand Clay's convoluted minstrel meanderings, declaring Clay is "getting things mixed."[198]

The more common black character that appears in both the amateur and commercial sites is the pathos-inducing, Uncle Tom-derived, emasculated elderly slave. As a contraband – one of those nebulous designations given to fugitive slaves during wartime – Pete fights at the close of the play, serving as a foil to Uncle Ben, who waits on General Corse. Ben is a contraband

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[196] John B. Renauld, *Our Heroes* (New York: Robert M. De Witt Publisher, 1873), 11.
[197] The Stage Yankee characters mostly serve as comic "local" color in the GAR plays, often flirting with a female counterpart from the same village in the opening scenes. These characters almost always appear courageous and "manly" in battle and camp scenes, though they are rarely as integral to the plot as the heroic lead male lover.
[198] Stedman, *The Confederate Spy*, 39.

too, preparing food and singing spirituals for General Corse, his "massa," while informing the good General that "de bondman must be free" when Corse asks if he ever grows discouraged. Ben is passive, taking a bullet while he scouts for sharpshooters unarmed at the play's close, loyal to the general's orders until his death: his freedom is circumscribed and ultimately denied within the rubric of black subservience. Old Joe in *The Union Spy* shares Topsy's genealogy, having "no brudder, no sister, no fader, no mudder, no nothin' but Joe. When you see Joe, you see all there is of us."[199] At one point, Joe holds his Confederate ex-master at gunpoint and demands dispatches from General Lee. Instead of receiving any credit for this heroic action, Old Joe utters a string of malapropisms while attempting to acquire the dispatches, and his new "massa," the Union spy Sleeper, hands the dispatches to Grant without any mention of Joe's role. When Sleeper is wounded and captured on the battlefield, Old Joe can only weep.

On the rare occasion when African American characters are depicted lacking minstrel trappings, there are still serious impediments to their advancement in the world of these amateur plays. Jim in the GAR play *The Old Flag* (1870) represents the ignorant minstrel type, believing his master's claims that the Yankee generals subject all the blacks they capture to execution – they are "roasted alive – burned to a crisp."[200] Jim's misconceptions are corrected by Sam, an African American fugitive slave who inexplicably speaks without dialect, aiding his ex-master Union spy with elaborate plans, and is crucial in a direct and tangible way to the Union's success. When Sam is captured by the Confederates and they attempt to execute him to so others will "see how niggers are served when they aid our enemies," a white woman intercedes and deflects the gun-wielding arm, saving the life of the African American man much as she saves the disgraced and emasculated Confederate soldier in other GAR plays.[201]

As mentioned above, the world of the GAR and amateur dramas is distinctly masculine, celebrating the military sphere and relegating women to a supporting feature. In many ways the

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[199] Osgood, *The Union Spy*, 8
[200] G.H. Walker, *The Old Flag: Or the Spy of Newbern* (Hartford: Soldier's Record Print, 1870), 4.
[201] Ibid., 43.

African American and ethnic characters inhabit the world of the amateur plays as third class citizens. There are no black female characters that appear in this masculine world. With the commercial excursions into the romanticized and nostalgic space of Southern innocence explored above, black female characters make more frequent appearances. The African American male characters increasingly lose the younger, rowdier versions of minstrel comedy in the commercial plays and tend to adhere more closely to the pathos-inspiring figures like Uncle Ben above, displaying the pathetic Uncle Tom models of pain and suffering that Linda Williams theorizes.

Reminiscent of the famous beating of Uncle Tom, loyal African American slaves submit themselves to torture – and very often display loyalty to their Confederate owners or the whites they serve in commercial sites rather than advocating for any sort of Union cause. While the black characters in the amateur plays very often transfer loyalty appropriately to the Union cause and its sentinels, the gendered space of nostalgia affixes blacks into a holding pattern of antebellum hierarchies. Rufus of *Held by the Enemy* offers to sacrifice himself for his Confederate spy master: "Ah wants ter have de 'rangements made so's dat Ah kin be shot unstead o' him."[202] Rufus says that he's a "val'able lot" and even offers the Union general the money he's set aside along with his own life so it would be a "fa'r bargin." The general responds that he cannot do the exchange, even though Rufus is the "real thing." Of course, Rufus is only the "real thing" because he is willing to lay down his life for his master – implying that the "real" blacks should recognize their inferior position. Zeb in *For Fair Virginia* (1895) steps in and claims he was acting as a spy, when in fact the white Union girl Nell (who happens to be in love with a Confederate) delivered the stolen orders to a nearby regiment. "Hush, Missie, Ise only a poor ole worn out nigger. My time's almost up anyhow."[203] Nell refuses and even threatens the Confederate who wants to beat the truth out of Zeb, saying that he "shan't suffer long for my

[202] William Gillette, *Held by the Enemy* (New York: Samuel French, 1898), 65.
[203] Whytal, *For Fair Virginia,* 59.

sake."[204] As shown by these examples, it is often to protect white privilege and life that African American characters wish to suffer in these commercial plays. When the heroine Dallas of *Surrender* hides Union men in her room, the family slave Clem is threatened with a beating to get information. Clem assures his mistress he can endure the torture, but Dallas argues that a "blow to him is a blow to me."[205] This is perhaps the most egregiously misplaced declaration of sympathy. Dallas is the daughter of a Confederate general in a once-wealthy Richmond home, but the play opens with the family only being able to serve baked beans at the party due to the Yankee siege. Clem has a monologue in this first scene where he laments the condition of his masters: "Think a forcing dis Northern convictions on my young missus what's always been used to ice cream and angel's feet." [206] He claims that his enslaved wife, Aunt Hannah, cried when she ironed the tattered clothing of his mistress. Dallas's objection to Clem's being beaten is meant to bind them together as joint victims of the war: though he will have to endure the physical pain, the violation to her, moral and material, is construed as being equal to his suffering in this racial equation.

Not all black slave characters onstage had masters that viewed their property as being comrades in the anguish brought on by the Yankee aggressors. Jonas in *Secret Service* has no merciful mistress who intervenes, but he is beaten repeatedly in an attempt to extract information on the note he holds for Captain Thorne. He reveals nothing, and his possible contribution to the Union and his viability as a political agent is doubly negated: the Confederate torturer suggests that they "don't need the niggah's evidence," and ultimately Thorne fails to execute the plan because of his Confederate sweetheart.[207]

When not being martyred or subjected to torture in place of their masters, the black characters in commercial dramas also display traits of the lazy, plantation "darkey," harmlessly genial and steeped in antebellum nostalgia. Uncle Dan'l of *The Heart of Maryland* is just such a

[204] Ibid., 60.
[205] Thomas, *Surrender*, 23.
[206] Ibid., 19.
[207] William Gillette, *Secret Service* in *Fateful Lightening*, 432.

character: a melon-toting plantation minstrel figure, whom a "cannon shot wouldn't rouse" as a white figure tellingly declares.[208] Other than adding Old Southern local color to the scene, Uncle Dan'l has very little purpose within the action of the play. He sits ruminating at the play's start, signaling a way of life that will soon be destroyed, as gunshots echo in the distance.

The lack of African American female slave characters presumably has much to do with the relative dearth of women performing in blackface when compared to male performers, since drag "wench" acts were rather common in blackface minstrelsy. It appears that actresses donned blackface as a specialty act, just like male actors who created a career on this skill. For example, actress Alice Leigh played both the role of the slave Martha in Gillette's *Secret Service* as well as the Confederate loyal slave Mammy Lu in *Barbara Frietchie*. Mammy Lu goes so far as to "bress de Lord" that "Frederick's a Rebel town again" and calls all the other slaves that flee the Frietchie house to the Yankee lines "low down, ornery niggars."[209] Her Confederate loyalties are even more curious in this play, since this one of the few commercial plays that *directly* touches upon the issue of slavery. As Barbara and her Union lover Trumbull debate their separate loyalties early on in the play – before Barbara takes up the Union flag – Trumbull asks if she thinks it is "right to own slaves?"

> *Barbara*. Yes! There isn't a darkey on our place who doesn't love us, and we love them.
> *Trumbull*. You hold it right to buy and sell human flesh, to take the young child from its mother, the wife from her husband—
> *Barbara*. [Interrupting.] How dare you repeat those things to me?
> *Trumbull*. I speak the truth. Here, in this very house—
> *Barbara*. [More angry.] Stop! I won't listen. Not to those blackguard lies from Union papers!
> *Trumbull*. Ah! you know what I say is true.
> *Barbara*. [Rising, furious.] No, lies! lies! *Confound all* you Yankee liars![210]

[208] David Belasco, *The Heart of Maryland* in *Fateful Lightening*, 485.
[209] Fitch, *Barbara Frietchie*, 87.
[210] Ibid., 38.

It becomes clear that Barbara is mistaken, since all the slaves except Mammy Lu desert. Barbara never addresses whether she has converted to abolitionism later in the play, but she certainly fits into the earlier model of white women who sacrifice political autonomy for romantic loyalty.

Another rare instance of slavery being directly broached in commercially produced sites occurs in James Herne's *The Reverend Griffith Davenport* – a production not nearly as popular as his earlier *Margaret Fleming* (1890). *The Reverend Griffith Davenport* sported a large cast of female black characters as a means of representing the idea of the extended community that Davenport supports on his plantation. Played again by only white actresses, the roles were mostly filled by character and supporting actresses familiar on the New York stage.[211] Considering the success of Herne's *Margaret Fleming*, it is not surprising that many actors would wish for a role in the premier realist playwright's newest production. The slaves in *Reverend Griffith Davenport* are horrified when their Union sympathizing master frees them, and the female slaves here cannot muster up the patriotic feelings that so many of the free white women in the commercial dramas display. Sallie was "proud at fust" but worried that her husband will be part of the war effort, and is even more upset when she sees that her master's son Roy is joining the fight.[212] The discombobulated Sallie is actually comforted by the idea of returning to her mistress's Virginia, overwhelmed by all the change in her life. Both in *Reverend Griffith Davenport* and *Surrender,* the slaves measure their worth based upon the circumstances of their master: the more advanced the social standing of their white owners, the more the black characters feel secure within their own community and display a sense of pride.

Because of the repeated voicing of sympathy from black characters towards the enslaving whites, there is an abiding sense in the commercial plays that black characters would prefer to reinstate the peculiar institution – or at least to maintain the power relations of the antebellum South. African American characters in both amateur and commercial ventures are repeatedly

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[211] For example, Mollie Revel, a character actress, played one of the slaves. "Off the Stage," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 10, 1879, pg. 1.
[212] Herne, *Reverend Griffith Davenport*, 160.

represented as either too unruly or too helpless to join the nation. The benevolent master and the dependent, child-like slave is the paradigm on the commercial stage. The elimination of slavery in the amateur dramas is part of the Union's achievement, but in the commercial sites of memories it is an almost-mourned institution. In both cases, African Americans – portrayed in the minstrel traditions by whites in blackface – were judged as not worthy of juridical equality.

The stereotypes of racial and Ethnic Others that appear in the amateur and commercial sites of Civil War memories – some more negative than others – ultimately serve to test the boundaries of whiteness. Because they were performed in the tradition of racial/ethnic humor or as sacrificial lambs at the altar of white privilege, these productions do not test whiteness in a way that would then result in what Haney López calls the "disassembly of Whiteness."[213] Even when German and Irish stage types were seemingly smuggled into the borders of whiteness on the commercial melodramatic stage, these characters did not proceed to destroy the constructs of race. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theatre audiences that enjoyed these productions as part of their leisure consumption did not do so with the "intention of consciously repudiating Whiteness" or recognize the inherent "value" of being White in terms of legal standing and all the protections of citizenship.[214] Haney López argues that only this realization will cause the dismantling of racial privilege and construction in this country. Instead of destabilizing the nebulous axis of whiteness alongside which all other ethnic and racial forms were measured, these theatrical sites invested power and value into the white male reunion that the reconcilationist vision facilitated.

Reconciling Memories

With the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, separate-but-equal became the law of the land, and the earlier attempts by Radical Republicans to establish an equal citizenry were quashed. With the passage of legalized segregation laws throughout the nation, the limits to

[213] Haney López, *White By Law*, 23.
[214] Ibid.

mental conceptions of democracy were demarcated. It was not only on stage that utopian, masculine white-washed spaces were re-created, but in everyday life an entire group of peoples – liberated only a few decades beforehand – were marked as unruly and unable to be ushered on equal footing into the sphere of rights and power that sovereign states can bestow.

The reconciliation vision of the war entailed multiple levels of exclusion: of women, both white and black, and of men deemed racial and ethnic Others in the visual and performative decoding that occurred while watching theatre performances. As General Grant viewed the 1879 production of *The Color Guard*, one can only wonder if – buried under the Republican bloody shirt rhetoric – he saw the exclusionary underpinnings inherent in the scenes he took in.

Throughout his political and public career the general remained a staunch Union man, lamenting in 1879 that Southerners culpable for the Civil War had received insufficient punishment. His first campaign slogan, "Let us Have Peace," did come to fruition, however: as Waugh points out, his Reconstruction platform wished to "reconcile the North and the South, to restore political, economic, and social relations," even if his project of African American advancement was not equally successful.[215]

The reconciliationist vision as represented onstage was not a tidily coherent bundle of memories: the blind spots and blurrings reveal tensions over gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship and the very concept of the nation-state. While the particulars varied, the general thrust of the reconciliationist vision remained the same. Sites of Civil War memories that spoke to the reconciliationist vision both inculcated and accommodated the exclusionary tendencies of white, bourgeois-status-seeking audiences during the Gilded Age. By consuming sentimentalized and white-washing reunion narratives, spectators of late nineteenth-century houses were lending value – fiscal, political, and social – to these sites. The durability of the commercial sites and the eventual decline of the amateur plays in memory, canon, and performance suggest that there was a shift in the structure of feeling in Civil War memories by the early twentieth century. The

[215] Waugh, *U.S. Grant*, 150.

Union cause eventually came to be worth less in terms of cultural and commercial value than the reunion motif, though the logic of "preserving the Union" that provided the foundation of the Union cause and allowed the re-admission of CSA constituents operated under the same logic of political forgetting. The embodied sites of performed memories masked and mediated the juridical and social instabilities towards the century's close: the changes in the modes of living, consumption of entertainments, immigration patterns, gender roles, and the very definition of who could be a citizen. Rather than questioning how easily nations were created and destroyed, the majority of United States theatre audiences embraced commercialized, nostalgic spaces of innocence, with autonomy-lacking women, happy and faithful slaves, patriotic old-wave immigrants, and men of honor from both North and South – all set in the crumbling remains of antebellum hierarchies.

Chapter 3

"'Tain't no black-faced white trash": African American Performances of Slavery and Emancipation

When the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition opened in September 1895, organizers hoped it would display the increasing technological and economic prowess of the South. Much was made of the advancement of the South since the war in the national newspapers – in terms of its economic development, race relations, and in the lack of sectional animosity thirty years after the surrender at Appomattox. The assistant to the exposition's president told the *New York Times* that although the city "was the scene of one of the most destructive and terrible battles of the war, the people there have lost sight of the causes which led to the war, and there is no sectional feeling."[1] As a "curious example of this oblivion of the past," he declared, the fair organizers had chosen a Union general and fifteen-year resident of Atlanta as one of the secretaries; General J.R. Lewis was part of Sherman's march, during which Atlanta was burned and left in ruins. A reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* commented on the violent history of the fair site at Piedmont Park, where "the North and South will meet as friendly neighbors."[2] It was there that "Gen. Sherman threw the first shell into Atlanta thirty-one years ago after his triumphant march to the sea."[3]

As a further display of these "friendly" relations among former foes, Union veterans appeared on the opening day as honored members of the celebrations. One Massachusetts lieutenant brought the flag that he had "waved from Kennesaw to Allatoona" as a "famous signal" between General Sherman and Corse during the skirmishes around Atlanta.[4] As the exposition officially began, the veteran took his place on the mountain and, re-enacting the

[1] "Exposition at Atlanta," *New York Times*, December 7, 1894, 1.
[2] "The International Exposition at Atlanta," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* September 8, 1895, 41.
[3] Ibid.
[4] "The Atlanta Exposition," *New York Times*, September 19, 1895, 1.

moment, "waved the same signal which he received thirty-one years ago."[5] Union veteran and fair secretary Lewis also spoke to the thousands of veterans that gathered on "Blue and Gray" day on September 21; his Confederate counterpart expressed a "mutual forgiveness," swearing that if he ever found the Union soldier "who fired the gun that laid him low in one of the battles of the war he would take him by the hand and salute him as a brother."[6]

When President Cleveland attended the fair in October, he delivered a speech to the thousands in attendance urging attendees to support only "political doctrines…which prompt the promotion of welfare" instead of "those which simply seem to serve selfish or sectional interests," citing the "spirit of broad American brotherhood" that made the exposition possible.[7] A narrative of reunion and sectional reconciliation was clearly the order of the day. As the crowd thronged about him, the president shook hands for close to an hour until, covered in sweat, he declared he was "fatigued." Strolling along the Midway after lunch, the president stopped only at one of the myriad entertainments along the walk – the Old Plantation exhibit.[8]

The cabin that was part of the Old Plantation was another tangled site within the complex web of war memory, history, and race at the Atlanta exposition. Supposedly the cabin itself had "gathered out of the past the magnetism of two great armies": Sherman's army disassembled the cabin – built in the 1820s by a newlywed as a present to his wife – and used its parts for fortification during the fighting in Atlanta.[9] The son of the builder/original owner reclaimed the logs and reconstructed the cabin upon his own wedding. Whether the owner was black or white is never mentioned; the story, as a whole, reads as a bit of romanticized Southern lore rather than a factual account. Regardless, the overlay of romantic love and war memory intended in the (most likely fabricated) cabin's "history" was unmistakable, even as it was re-purposed and relocated for the Midway. The plantation was touted as the most entertaining

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[5] Ibid.
[6] "Blue and Gray at Atlanta," *Sun*, September 23, 1895, 1.
[7] "Cleveland at the Atlanta Exposition," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 1895, 4.
[8] Theda Purdue, *Race and the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition of 1895* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 49.
[9] "The Thriving Plantation," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 14, 1895, 4.

part of the Midway: it had all the "life and fun of the best minstrel show" while also "being a faithful production of the Old Plantation."[10] Outside stood an "old negro aunty" enticing in visitors by "'ringin' de bell for a cakewalk,'" assuring potential audience members that "dis here am sho' 'nough 'possum-eatin' black nigger in here; 'tain't no black-faced white trash. Come erlong an' see de nigger at de corn' shuckin' in de reg'lar ole plantation."[11] Within, a group of African Americans sang and danced (*Harper's Weekly* compared them to the "wild beasts of Kipling's jungle stories"), while an actor stood stage-side and prepared an older performer for the show, "doing his make-up…by picking cotton from out of a bush and sticking it on with mucilage for hair and beard."[12] All throughout an "admiring throng of 'coons'" in the audience stand "making suggestions."[13] Newspaper accounts state that there was an auditorium set up for this attraction, and this was clearly framed *as performance* rather than framed as a pseudo-anthropological attraction à la the Dahomey village of Chicago (or the surrounding sites along the Atlanta Midway). The incompatibility of this engineered performance of the vestiges of antebellum life and the so-called "genuineness" and "entirely natural" production of the plantation scene were not articulated in newspaper accounts.[14] Indeed, it was reported that "nothing on stage could be more lifelike or funnier" than the black minstrel act and the "life-stirring scene of the 'Cake Walk'" on display.[15]

President Cleveland, riding down the Midway in a coach drawn by four horses, demanded to stop and see the site. The old woman outside asked if "dis de massa president what I hearn my ole man say wus comin' to Atlanty again," before proceeding to ask the presidential

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[10] "Atlanta and the Old Plantation," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 3, 1895, 2.
[11] "The Midway at the Atlanta Exposition," *Harper's Weekly*, November 23, 1895
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] "Atlanta and the Old Plantation," *Atlanta Constitution*.
[15] "The Thriving Plantation," *Atlanta Constitution*. One visitor wondered why Nate Salsbury's Black America was not commissioned for the Midway, because of its more elaborate display of "hand pickers at work," rather than an opportunity "to show off Angus Campbell's cotton-picking machine." Still the visitor was sure that non-Southern attendees would find it fascinating. See "Exposition Side Lights," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 9, 1895, 7.

entourage for a "dime" to help her "bones…wracked wid de rhumatiz."[16] A black choir soon struck up a spiritual embedded with codes of liberty, but was ignored by the papers and the president. As Theda Purdue points out, "for whites the Old Plantation conjured up nostalgic images of a romanticized past," which enthralled the president and other fair attendees alike.[17]

Nostalgia – particularly when associated with slavery – is a vexed subject. It allows the audience access to a time they may or may not have had direct experience in, but at this period it was almost always in an optimistic rendering of enslavement. The past becomes "more vivid, and infinitely more desirable, than the present" in the workings of nostalgia.[18] The idea that returning to slavery could be "desirable" is the problematic implication in nostalgic representations like the cabin performance President Cleveland so enjoyed.

Slavery and its abolition were the main facets of the emancipationist vision; the war was fought over slavery and for the liberation of black slaves, and no other interpretation of the war's "meaning" could trump this glorious end. However, as the African American community struggled for juridical, economic, social power, and some semblance of equality in the post-war years, the treatment of slavery became a contested issue. In this chapter, I will examine the emancipationist vision represented in various sites of African American memories onstage – specifically, those sites of memories that are set at least in some part on the plantation South prior to the war and speak directly to the slave experience. Within the turn-of-the-century black community, there was much debate over how slavery and emancipation could (or if it even should) be remembered and celebrated. In terms of theatrical performance, both David Krasner and Barbara Webb have provided useful models for studying early African American theatre. Krasner focuses primarily on black musicals at the turn of the century, arguing for the ubiquity of "the black theatrical aesthetic that utilized resistance, parody, and double consciousness in

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[16] "In a Blaze of Light," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 24, 1895, 5.
[17] Purdue, *Race and the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition,* 49.
[18] Lee Glazer and Susan Key, "Carry Me Back: Nostalgia for the Old South in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture," *Journal of American Studies* 30, no. 1 (April 1996): 12.

light of conflicting objectives."[19] Webb also notes important moves towards identity building and professional advancement embedded in plantation shows that were seemingly detrimental to racial progress: in these shows she acknowledges the "touchstone" aspects of performances with "black specialization and innovation" that "turned the terms of circumstances of marginalization into occasions for mobilization."[20] While Krasner and Webb's models are useful, there is no broader consideration of how Civil War memories – of slavery, soldiering, resistance, and emancipation – were envisioned, elided, and performed. The celebrations of war memories within the African American communities for the most part differed drastically from those represented on the popular stage, for clear commercial and social reasons. I will argue that the struggles to create alternative spaces for advancement and the attempts to define a coherent model of black citizenship were constantly under revision and subversion.

I begin with Atlanta and its 1895 fair – rather than the more documented Chicago World's Fair – because the place of the South and the African American in reality and in the cultural imaginary was writ large via the Atlanta exposition. The economic and social blockades for African Americans will further contextualize the conditions of the theatre industry for black performers, who often had to contend with notions of authenticity and nostalgia or slavery by white-dominated audiences. From here, I will tease out the histories presented in productions set explicitly (and sometimes solely) in slave settings and those that straddle the slavery/emancipation divide. Furthermore, the construction and representations of slavery, emancipation, gender, and race will be examined more closely in these various sites of memories concerning slavery and thus, in some fashion, are grounded in the emancipationist vision.

At the heart of the melodramatic sites of European American memories in chapters two and four is the pursuit of white, procreative, often inter-regional romance that ensures the continuation of the white nation-state. The space of innocence in these melodramas – as

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[19] David Krasner, *Resistance, Parody, and Double Consciousness in African American Theatre, 1895-1910* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 3.
[20] Barbara Webb, "Authentic Possibilities Plantation Performances of the 1890s," *Theatre Journal* 56, no. 1 (March 2004): 82.

depicted in productions that constitute various sites of memories within the Union, reunion, and white supremacist visions of the war – are linked to notions of white-washed utopian nations, where the continuation of the white race is guaranteed within the parameters of (often intersectional) romantic unions as well. While I argue that these are fictitious, unachievable spaces of innocence, these dramatic depictions are invested with real political anxiety, allowing theatrical enactments of the prescriptive juridical measures that would work to exclude Others and create a hegemonic white privilege.

This melodramatic formula takes on different valences in regards to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American performance. Many of the productions mentioned in this chapter – musical comedies, revues, spectacles, and melodramas – do not highlight the achievement of reunion in both the political sense and/or a romantic sense: for blacks in the United States, there was no prior utopia to return to – there was no idyllic agrarian or preindustrial antebellum world in which slavery was not a political reality. Even in the antebellum North, where slavery had been outlawed decades before the Civil War, blacks lived in the knowledge that liberty was not enjoyed by all. In addition, there was an omnipresent threat that, like Solomon Northup, a free black man or woman could be captured and sold into the peculiar institution. There have been various points in the search for civil rights and origins when black cultural products have drawn upon tropes of Africa as a possible utopian space; indeed, several theatrical productions of the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth centuries did explore a return to Africa.[21]

This chapter will focus on what alternative spaces are proposed in these productions; there are no pre-war gardens to return to within the history of black life in the United States, only spaces inscribed by slavery. If there is no melodramatic space of innocence, what, instead, does slavery and its demise mean? And how do these popular entertainments, produced and/or

[21] See Karen Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), chapter 4; Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), chapter 4; Krasner, *Resistance, Parody, and Double-Consciousness*, chapter 5.

devised by black performers, try to reconcile war memories and the emancipationist vision, when the second civil war (as Mark Grimsley calls it) was already lost? I will argue that African American productions of memories provided myriad professional opportunities for black performers, staged and challenged debates about racial uplift and bourgeois models of respectability, and played with constructions of race and whiteness. Unlike some other sites of memories explored in the preceding and following chapter, several of these black performances truly sought to stage a distinct political narrative – and often played for and against audience expectations to smuggle in such narratives. However, these gestures and smuggled in references – while empowering to black performers and spectators who may (or may not) have noted the political valences of these performances – could not ultimately offer the brand of immediate equality that some black activists demanded.

There are a few difficulties posed in examining these sites, some of which overlap with theatre history studies more generally, but several are particular to the study of black performance in the Gilded Age and early Progressive Era more generally. The archive is, as always, not as complete as a theatre historian would wish; at times there are only hints of performances, tantalizing production names, vague references in newspaper ads or arts sections, but other substantive evidence is missing. This is even more of an issue when it comes to African American performance in this era, though much has been done by several theatre historians to piece together the archival evidence and analyze what lies therein.[22] However, because of the nature of African American employment and deployment within the theatre industry during the post-Civil War, pre-World War years – they were often used as extras, as part of specialty acts, with a focus on the "authentic" songs and dances of black performers, or as in revue-structured shows where the plots did not hinge on melodramatic forms, as in "legitimate" theatre – the performance texts that remain on copyright deposit and in other archives are suspect as

[22] While many of the scholars in the above footnote have likewise constructed performances from limited archival remains, Errol G. Hill and James V. Hatch's *A History of African American Theatre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) gives a comprehensive history and incorporates many references (however limited the resources) for performances in the late nineteenth century in particular.

documents that accurately convey performance. Karen Sotiropoulos succinctly describes the more fluid formats of these entertainments, the "scripted plot changed frequently from performance to performance, and often times these 'full length' musical comedies more closely resembled a series of thematically related (and sometimes unrelated) vaudeville sketches."[23] These productions were performer-driven, focusing on the talents at hand rather than making the performers conform to the written word of the author. This does not mean, however, that the potential politics and investments in representations that we have information on cannot be reconstructed. It is likewise important to note that, as Sotiropoulos argues, these productions (with the exception of Du Bois's *Star of Ethiopia* pageant) were not explicitly invoking political movements, endorsing the NAACP, or otherwise making an overt statement: instead, performers "were involved in parallel projects – their performing world and that of twentieth-century black political organizations grew up together."[24] It is worth noting, too, that many of the performances did not represent – in the style preferred by many activists in the black community – an overt narrative of racial uplift.

Before delving more into the conditions for black theatre performers and the political moves being made in these performances, analyzing the many and tangled memories on display at the Atlanta fair will begin to expose some of the competing notions of race, history, and citizenship at play. Indeed, the Atlanta fair reveals the aftermath of what Mark Grimsley calls the second civil war, fought for racial inequality during Reconstruction – and lost by the 1890s.

Atlanta: A Microcosm of the Second Civil War

Race relations at the Atlanta fair serve as a microcosm for the struggles within the black community and the realities of inequality in everyday life. Amidst all the reminders of history as markers of progress during the exposition, Booker T. Washington rose to the podium as one of the various dignitaries speaking on that opening day. It was on this occasion that he delivered

[23] Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 65.
[24] Ibid., 78.

his famous (and, by some reckonings, notorious) Atlanta Compromise speech, wherein he urged both whites and blacks to "cast down your bucket" and proposed the need for economic advancement on the part of African Americans rather than participate in the ongoing struggle for equal rights: a vocationally-based stance that put him in conflict with many other African American activists (like W.E.B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells) who demanded immediate equality.[25]

This speech was not the only incident to cause argument within the African American community in regards to the fair; while many considered it a boon that blacks were included in the fair, others construed the inclusion to be a limited concession. As opposed to Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1893 – aptly named the "White City" due to its design and pointed exclusion of African American organizations, the white patricians and designers of the Atlanta fair could not ignore forty percent of the city's population and remove blacks from the narrative of Southern progress. African Americans were included on the organizational board (though with restricted function), a "Negro Building" was established, various congresses featuring black leaders and workers were held, art work featuring black artists was shown, a black military regiment staged a pageant, a prominent member of the community was included in the opening day speeches (namely, Booker T. Washington), and African Americans were permitted to visit all the exhibitions and Midway attractions. This last point had to be clarified by the head of the Negro department via the press, as word was being spread that admission to some features of Piedmont Park were prohibited.[26]

The *Cleveland Gazette* reporters granted that admission was race-blind, but the selling of refreshments and seating arrangements in auditoriums and other venues were still decidedly segregated – and these writers pointed out that African Americans were not permitted on the

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[25] Purdue, *Race and the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition,* 27-30. Heather Cox Richardson reads Washington's address as a "radical and effective statement in favor of African-American power," as black laborers representing "traditional mid-nineteenth-century workers…attempting to erase the negative images of political, civil rights, and labor agitations of the past decades that had conflated t place constant negative pressure on the black community" Purdue, *Race*, 5. This position, in turn, tapped into earlier narratives of American upward mobility via hard work.

[26] "How Afro-Americans Are Treated at the Atlanta Exposition," *Afro American*, Baltimore, November 2, 1895, 1.

roof gardens where various entertainments were held. An "invisible line" was clearly "drawn" according to the paper.[27] The editors at the *Springfield Daily Republican* – another African American newspaper – acknowledged that the white South had made "unheard-of concessions in direct conflict with the prejudice against race and condition upon which they consider the foundations of society to rest." [28] Indeed, the authors declared that it "amounts to a revolution in which race prejudice in the south has received its most decisive knockdown since the war. But what has been conceded is not sufficient, because it does not comprehend the whole measure of right."[29] They go on to claim that the Negro Building offered the only equitable racial treatment, while the surrounding environment at the fair and beyond – hotels, rail travel, etc. – failed to provide suitable arrangements for African Americans of "comfortable means."[30] Black women identified as "ladies" within the community were in particular subject to prejudice and abuse at the hands of white Southern men, who embraced a firmly-entrenched belief that middle-class African American women "can never be regarded as ladies" and regarded any black women "as Dinahs who ought to wear red bandannas on their heads if they do not, who are habitually designated as 'nigger wimmin, sah.'"[31] Such overall treatment seemingly discouraged many African Americans from attending, and the *Springfield Daily Republican* suspected that the historically entrenched racial hierarchies and prejudices of the South cost Atlanta thousands. Clearly, the various strands and narratives of progress (technological, economic, and historic), race relations, and historical memory were particularly tangled during the Atlanta exposition.

Along with the president's favorite "authentic" midway entertainment, Northern visitors to the International States and Cotton Exposition were informed in a lengthy handbook prepared by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* that another layer of authenticity could be found in

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[27] "They Do Draw It. That is, the 'Color Line' on the Grounds of the Atlanta Exposition," *Cleveland Gazette,* December 7, 1895, 1. The *Gazette* was an African American newspaper, and it is—of course—primarily in the African American newspapers where the debate over the extent of black inclusion in the exposition was carried out.
[28] "Negroes and the Exposition," *Springfield Daily Republican*, December 25, 1895, 10.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

Atlanta. "People who went to see Augustus Thomas' play, 'Alabama,'" the authors of the handbook state, "remember that one character in it says…that you must go South if you want to find Americans now-a-days."[32] The South itself was, in this rendering of Northern conceptualization, a space of the *real* America – with fewer immigrants, less industrialization, and more reliance on a utopian, early republican agrarian ideal. The handbook creator points out how "American" the citizens, speech, and surroundings of Atlanta are repeatedly. Furthermore, the reporters hint how the curious historian can travel back in time and "see the city of the civil war": "go into the back streets and among the negro quarters."[33] While the city itself provided a fantastical compromise of turn-of-the-century heterotopias – thoroughly modern but simultaneously untainted by mass industrialization and immigration, the African American living spaces could provide a peek into an antebellum space of innocence and nostalgia. The "real" history of the nation could be glimpsed where the southern African American lived and breathed.

The contradictions present in the fair reflect the same contradictions playing out in the nation at large – and particularly in the South. African Americans were ostensibly protected by the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. Immediately after the war, Southern state legislatures passed Black Codes severely curtailing the basic rights of the newly emancipated population. Further attempts at equality on a federal level – such as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 that tried to enforce equality in the public sphere, which was then overturned by the Supreme Court in 1883 – were swiftly dismantled or blocked by states or courts. Mark Grimsley and other historians have termed the battle over race and rights during Reconstruction a "second civil war" fought in "the political and economic arenas" as well as "waged through political violence," a battle which white conservatives won, denying "black southerners…meaningful participation in political life" and setting up "a system of racial

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[32] *Handbook to the Cotton States and International Exposition*. Atlanta: *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* Information Bureau, 1895, 6.
[33] Ibid., 4.

apartheid."[34] Grimsley notes that the "Redeemers had overthrown or outlasted the Republican state government and restored home rule" by 1877, and that white fear of a race war lingered.[35] Violence, intimidation, voting laws, and segregation (eventually legally allowed) repeatedly enforced the inequality of white supremacy. An overwhelming majority of African Americans lived under racial apartheid: even by 1910, all but 10% of the African American population lived on and worked in the South.[36] The everyday working conditions of many African Americans removed a generation or two from slavery did not change – many still labored and sharecropped for little or no wages. The prejudice was not only present in the South, of course: Desmond King and Stephen Tuck argue that "Southern white supremacy was constructed *in conjunction with,* rather than *in opposition to*, developments in the rest of the country after Reconstruction," with "a systematic and effective drive to establish white supremacy that mirrored developments in the South."[37] The opportunities for black advancement were not restricted to the South alone, but it was of course more apparent, since 90% of the African American population resided there. The treatment of African Americans at the Atlanta fair, as part of the "New South," reunited with the North, displaying an increasing agricultural and industrial prowess, with the wounds of war supposedly healed: except, of course, the second civil war more recently waged against racial equality ensured that these wounds were brutally exposed and continued to fester.

It is in this world that African American performers had to contend with the history of minstrelsy, the politics of postwar advancement, and the widespread white supremacist ideologies that would legalize Jim Crow separate-but-unequal practices. They had to work within and against a white-dominated culture that wanted to read antebellum authenticity within black bodies in an attempt to return to prewar hierarchies and ways of life. The dark

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[34] Mark Grimsley, "Wars for the American South: The First and Second Reconstruction Considered as Insurgencies," *Civil War History* 58, no. 1 (March 2012): 7.
[35] Ibid., 22.
[36] Charles Aiken, *The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 17.
[37] Desmond S. King and Stephen G.N. Tuck, "De-centering the South: America's Nationwide White Supremacist Order After Reconstruction," *Past & Present* 194 (Feb 2007): 214.

bodies that moved in the back alleys of the Atlanta exposition's host city, or performed surrounded by cabins and trappings of plantation life, had to contend with the conflations of "authentic" and "slavery" in performance, along with the bigotry and potential violence that could occur off-stage.

Slavery and "The Primal Scene"

The plantation cabin is a central trope within the depiction of slavery, in large part because of Harriet Beecher Stowe's adored, maligned, and heavily adapted contribution to American literature, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This cabin like the one President Cleveland was so fond of is explicitly set within and on the antebellum plantation. Jayna Brown identifies the "cotton plantation" as the "primal scene," and its many appearances in turn-of-the-century culture confirms its "centrality as a site at which the terms of contact and sets of exchanges making up ideas of race in the United States were founding," while "erasing the memory of violent interracial relations."[38] The importance of the slave-era plantation – as a site of erasure and of racial construction – clearly serves a variety of functions for different groups and populations.

The "primal scene" of the plantation can work both ways; it is a fixed place on the American landscape that cultivated slave labor and represents all those inherent oppressions, but it also represents a state of being that African Americans escaped from in the move from property to juridical personhood.

Whether or not slavery should be remembered as part of commemoration events was a debated topic within the black community. As the gains of Reconstruction were undone and the piecemeal dismantling of civil rights amendments was a regular part of Southern governance post-Reconstruction, a "deep-seated ambivalence regarding the legacy of slavery" emerged.[39] As historian Mitch Kachun points out, the story of emancipation and the lives of black men and

[38] Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 141.
[39] Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 148.

women after the war could be a "source of race pride, representing the race's destiny as a central and redemptive component in the divinely ordained advancement of human liberty," but such memories could also serve as a reminder of "collective racial humiliation" and "fe[e]d the continued derision of the larger society."[40] But the fact of the matter remained that the professional opportunities afforded by plantation shows for black performers were by and large the only performing roles prior to avenues opened by George Walker, Bert Williams, and the like.

But because song and dance were so interlinked with defining the authenticity of the black performer and tying them to an authentic plantation history as "happy slaves," the political implications of such performances are unsettling. The sites of memories set in or drawing imagery from slavery could, for dominant white audiences, reinforce the pervasive national white supremacy and the outcome of this second civil war. In a context where the abolitionist and emancipationist memories were seemingly removed, why and how did black performers justify and navigate the memories of slavery? Why be doubly exploited, or even triply exploited – once by poor working conditions, a second time by an audience that, in certain areas, would not even allow you to stay in a town overnight without inciting racial violence, and thrice by the content portrayed and its return to the potentially humiliating primal scene of slavery?

This is where Barbara Webb's assessment of late nineteenth-century plantation shows offers the most helpful analysis of these productions. Webb warns against relying on a progression-based, teleological model for analyzing black performance in the late nineteenth-century. Drawing on Paul Gilroy, she argues that "black performance may hold commercial appeal for white audiences without sacrificing black cultural authenticity."[41] Webb argues against examining the "deformed" nature of this era for black performance history, instead considering how "performers mobilized themselves within these commercial and historical

[40] Ibid., 150.
[41] Webb, 64.

constraints to create potential touchstones for African American identification and empowerment."[42] Plantation spectacles that, at first glance, seemingly relied on minstrel stereotypes very often incorporated in a variety of performance forms (quartets, buck and wing dancing, etc.), and many African Americans would have recognized the professionalization of performance forms (deemed "authentic" or not) via this inclusion. Focusing on one buck-and-wing dancer, Webb focuses on how these performers "negotiated narrow white definitions of appropriate black performance with black spectacle and innovation."[43] She believes that we can use "this very act of negotiation, rather than behind or aside from performance themes and audience expectations, to locate black cultural integrity."[44]

Though Webb problematizes David Krasner's teleological construction of theatre history in terms of authenticity, Krasner's studies on the pervasiveness of double-consciousness in theatrical performance in an era of heightened race restrictions are crucial to finding the gaps in the emancipationist vision in communal celebrations and those apparently not-so-emancipationist visions presented on the popular stage. The layers of coding and critique that black performers wielded for the pleasure of black audiences have been examined in many productions and supported by newspaper accounts of audience reactions as well.

By examining plantation shows with the models of these two theatre scholars and historian Kathleen Clark, we can see that the context of these performances is central to understanding the seemingly jumbled and non-progressive political messages. Clark focuses mostly on Emancipation Day and other memorial celebrations by African Americans for the fifty years after the war, but her points about the turmoil within the black community in the face of Jim Crow apply to the performance industry as well. She finds an "odd mixture of conciliation, defiance, capitulation, and resolution" in the commemorative events that she examines, and even if such events seem "politically crippled," they "must be viewed in the context of profound

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[42] Webb, 65.
[43] Webb, 67.
[44] Ibid.

crisis and sharply diminished possibility."[45] African American performances should be viewed in this same light: when considering the context of a fought and lost second civil war on the front of racial equality, professional opportunities for blacks outside of the agrarian slave-like setting where many whites wished them to remain were vastly important. Thus, I will focus on the moments of innovations within sites of performance slave memories and the touchstones for identity formation, professionalization, and counter-narratives. To understand how performances of slavery could work in these varied capacities, the realities of theatre and performance conditions for early black performers must first be addressed.

Authentic Industry: Touring and Performing as an African American

Part of the marketability of black bodies in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era was the authenticity inscribed upon them. The perceived corporality of black performance was at the heart of the specialty acts, the singing choruses, the buck-and-wing dance-offs, and all the instances in which black bodies were deployed to lend a plantation musical or scene an aura of authenticity. From the bodies that moved in the back alleys of Atlanta that so resembled antebellum life to the *Brooklyn Eagle* reporter, or performed blackness as "no black-faced white trash" surrounded by cabins and trappings of plantation life could, commercial theatre frequently capitalized on this marketable veneer of authenticity imposed upon black bodies.

This is not to say that commercial representations of plantations were the only modes of performance: Errol Hill and James Hatch document several amateur and professional productions around the nation in the post-war years, but there tends to be little beyond newspaper mentions to go on.[46] However, touring minstrel groups, along with jubilee shows and gigs as extras in white plantation shows (including versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), were the

[45] Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913 (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 196. Clark is specifically focusing on Southern blacks, but as 90% of the population lived in the South and – as mentioned above – the white supremacist ideology was nationally pervasive on the whole, the crises and lack of possibilities pertained to the majority of the African American population.
[46] Errol Hill, "The Civil War to *The Creole Show*," in *History*, eds. Hill and Hatch, 68-70.

primary professional opportunities for black performers prior to the 1890s.[47] When they began to work on the minstrel stage shortly before the war, African American performers had to confront the stereotypes that were propagated via antebellum blackface minstrelsy. Whoever controlled the means of theatrical production – who devised, funded, and sent these shows on the road– controlled the stereotypes and marketing strategies at play: and for decades, white theatre producers and directors controlled black performers.[48] More recent work establishes the prominence of the antebellum black performer Juba – real name William Lane – who was frequently advertised as being the "true" and "real" conveyer of black dancing. In a more recent consideration of Juba's career and afterlife, Stephen Johnson believes that Juba was "perceived by this audience as an ethnological display, not *acting* but *being*."[49] Thus, with even the earliest black performers for white-dominated audiences, there was an anthropological approach to staging the "real" or "natural" or "authentic" black body in motion. The all-black minstrel companies that began forming in the 1850s were also beset by such advertising of authenticity, and as more companies took to the road in the 1870s, Marian Winter claims that "there was a relentless, and impalpable, pressure to stereotype the stage Negro completely" on the part of African American performers.[50] Hill and Hatch make much of the authenticity that was capitalized and commented on by troupes and critics alike in black minstrel troupes leading

[47] The work of Bob Cole, the Johnson brothers, Will Marion Cook, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Aida Overton Walker, Bert Williams, and George Walker amongst others did much to offer alternatives beyond working as minstrel performers or plantation extras starting in the 1890s; however, many of these performers got their start by working in minstrel or plantation-oriented shows.

[48] Robert Toll found evidence that the troupes of the 1860s were actually managed and owned by African Americans - it was the 1870s that saw white managers asserted control. There were a few black troupes beyond the 1870s owned by African Americans, but they "simply could not match their white adversaries in influence and capital." See Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 199, 211.

[49] Stephen Johnson, "Death and the Minstrel: Race, Madness, and Art in the Last (W)Rites of three Early Blackface Performers," in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Stephen Johnson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 80.

[50] Marian Winter, "Juba and American Minstrelsy," in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy,* eds. Annemarie Bean, James Hatch, Brooks McNamara (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 233.

"white minstrels to drop their plantation material and substitute variety acts" in the face of real African Americans laying claim to representing plantation life.[51]

Along with the rising popularity of black minstrel troupes after the war, black performers were incorporated as extras and specialty act performers in spectacle-driven melodramas like *In Old Kentucky* (1893) or *On the Mississippi* (1894) set in the postwar South, a practice already established in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* versions of the 1870s. In John Frick's recent study of the pervasiveness of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in popular culture, he argues that post-war Tom shows "erased the last vestiges of abolitionist sentiment" and were vehicles for minstrelsy rather than political performances.[52] By the 1880s, Tom shows provided opportunities for both male and female black performers. As Tom Fletcher states in his autobiography, women were not allowed to work in minstrel shows until the 1890s, but were able to be part of the cast – both as chorus members and as minor characters ("Cassie, Emmaline, Sambo, Gumbo, Pete, and Rastus") in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[53] The incorporation of African Americans into the chorus to lend authentic atmosphere was first made popular by Jarrett and Palmer, "whose plantation scenes showing masses of slaves became the model for all other producers" – they included up to 800 extras.[54] The first black man to take on the role of Uncle Tom in 1878 was well-known minstrel performer Sam Lucas, at the behest of one of the Frohman brothers.[55] Tom Fletcher's first stage

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[51] Hatch, "American Minstrelsy in Black and White," in *History*, 110.

[52] John Frick, *Uncle Tom's Cabin on the American Stage and Screen* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 120. Of course, there were many anti-Tom versions prior to the Civil War, and even after the war there were pockets of the South that still found Stowe's story an unpardonable offense to the region. As late as 1902, the United Confederate Veterans and Daughters of the Confederacy in Lexington, Kentucky, passed resolutions demanding that the manager of the local opera house not allow *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to play. A member of the UCV told the manager that "the war had been over thirty-six years, but the sentiment still lives in the Southerner's heart and the action of the theatre manager was a reflection on the Southern women." The CSA veteran went on to say that Stowe's narrative was "libelous," and that it would be "a dishonor to bring that play into the South." "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Montgomery Advertiser*, January 21, 1902, 5.

[53] Tom Fletcher, *100 Years of the Negro in Show Business* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1954), 7.

[54] Frick, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 144. See pages 128-30 for more information on Henry Jarrett and Harry Palmer's versions, begun in 1878.

[55] See Frick, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 121. Frick says that production was not terribly successful: Eva was "so heavy that she nearly squashed the actor playing St. Clare," and Lucas had to bail the failing cast out and "pawn[ed] some of his famous diamonds to purchase train tickets to Cincinnati for the entire troupe" (122).

appearance was as an extra for a Tom troupe which "came to town short of atmosphere for the plantation scene."[56] The show Fletcher participated in as a boy in Portsmouth, Ohio most likely paled in comparison to the elaborate spectacle-driven manifestations of the show. One ad in an appearing in the 1889 *New York Clipper* called for musicians and performers ("must be Good Dressers on and off the Stage") for "Stetson's Mammoth Spectacular Double 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' Company:" if potential employees were not won over by the promise of being part of the "best equipped outfit" or the "uniforms" that "will be the finest money can procure," they might have been swayed by the promise of performing alongside "a pack of genuine Siberian and Cuban Bloodhounds and the Smallest Pony and Donkey in the World."[57] Frick suggests that "even the smallest Tom companies enhanced their offerings" after the war as these mammoth traveling shows gained popularity; but with leaner budgets and fewer technological capabilities, smaller troupes relied instead on "the simple presentation on stage of large numbers of African American performers," whether they all traveled with the show or some extras were pulled from the surrounding areas.[58] Black performing bodies were smuggled into Tom shows as specialty acts, with (at best) tenuous connections to the original narrative: boxers, buck-and-wing dancers, pickanniny bands, cake-walkers, jubilee singing, and all sorts of black performance styles were presented as interludes or somehow forced into the plot.[59] Certainly the inclusion of

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[56] Fletcher, *100 Years*, 8.

[57] Ad, *New York Clipper*, June 29, 1889; reprinted in Lynn Abbot and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 54. As Frick elaborates, these dogs were hardly well-trained stunt animals of the contemporary Hollywood ilk. One method of encouraging the dogs to chase Eliza across the ice floes was by making baby Harry a bundle of meat: when she tossed the meat, it would appear that the dogs were viciously attempting to attack her rather than simply getting a treat. Clearly, canine-related injuries were a very real possibility.

[58] Frick, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 144.

[59] For instance, in what must have been a drastically altered adaptation, the Worcester Theatre in Massachusetts advertised an 1893 production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* wherein the role of Tom would be taken by Peter Jackson, a black "heavyweight pugilist" and a local fighter, who would take on the role of the "auctioneer." Ten years later, another production at the same theatre promised the audience that the "original 'Georgia Shouters'" to play "the negroes in the cotton field" that would be "seen in plantation dances, and…heard in plantation songs." Vaudeville and specialty acts were likewise inserted: in an Al Martin touring version appearing in Rhode Island in 1901, audiences could enjoy intermissions of vaudeville acts, such a young singing boy and a group of cake walkers, with the "smallest cake walker in the world, Baby Henrietta" serving as the star of that display. The sparring match and cake walk interludes are just a small sampling of the acts, spectacles, and specialties that were used to draw in

such a variety of performances suggests that black performance forms were being recognized in their own right, and producers were capitalizing on explicitly African American dance, song, and performance – thereby creating more spaces and opportunities for such performances.

The Hyers Sisters used the ubiquity and popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to challenge racial norms in casting, going against prior models that left black bodies in the chorus and gave speaking roles mostly to white performers in blackface. After departing the stages they grew up singing on in California and finding success touring nationally with their productions *Out of Bondage* (1876) and *Urlina, the African Princess* (1879), their combination company premiered *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1880) in Boston. In their version, black performers played all the African American roles – Topsy (Emma Hyers), Eliza (Anna Hyers), Uncle Tom (Sam Lucas during the initial season), etc. - and white actors played white roles. This was only possible, Hill and Hatch argue, because of the "respect accorded the sisters by members of the theatrical profession."[60] A New Haven paper commented on this "novel feature" of mixed race casting, but assured potential audience members that there was "no reason why it should not be successful, as the Hyers Sisters and Sam Lucas are exceedingly clever people and possessed of a deal of talent."[61] The manager, M.T. Skiff, for Hathaway & Pond's Ideal Uncle Tom's Cabin Company with the Hyers Sisters, wrote a Portland newspaper claiming that another company called the "Ideal Uncle Tom's" was an imposter troupe. The production featuring the Hyers Sisters and a "complete white dramatic company" was staged "for the purpose of presenting this time honored drama in nature's own coloring, all the slave characters being represented by colored people for the first time in the world."[62] Even in the Hyers Sisters' attempts to be involved in

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audiences and make Uncle Tom's Cabin novel for its audiences by touring groups – typically by incorporating African American performers in some capacity. See "Sparring at the Theatre," *Worcester Daily Spy,* December 31, 1893, 8; "No Dark Nights at Any of the Local Playhouses This Week," *Worcester Daily Spy*, February 8, 1903, 8; "A New 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" *Pawtucket Times*, December 31, 1901, 5.

[60] Errol Hill, "The Civil War to *The Creole Show*," in *History,* 73.

[61] "Entertainments," *New Haven Evening Register*, April 13, 1880, 4.

[62] "Card to the Public," *Portland Daily Press*, May 6, 1880, 3.

what was a landmark moment for interracial performance, the white manager appealed to the audience's desire for authenticity, to see "nature's own coloring" on display.

The attempts by white producers to include such authenticating gestures could, as both Karen Sotiropoulos and Barbara Webb claim, have embedded meanings for black audiences. It seems clear, however, that with white producers and theatre-owners controlling most of the means of production, white hunger for authentic black representation still was the most overt market. As Sotiropoulos points out, black minstrels "often named their troupes as if they had just walked off the plantation," explicitly named after a Southern region or even taking on the name of "slaves," such as the Georgia Slave Brothers.[63] Surveying one day's reports of theatrical activity in the African American newspaper *Freeman* from 1902, the attempts to cater to white audience demands for authenticity and nostalgia for slavery is pronounced: the Southern Plantation Company was touring North Carolina, the Alabama Warblers were in the West ("we are doing the best and setting the West crazy"), the Old Plantation Minstrels worked with the Southern Carnival company (where they took part in a "horse-back riding party" while on tour in the mountains near El Paso and one member "carried off the honors by bagging three jack rabbits with a '45"), along with two companies touring the revue shows *Hottest Coon in Dixie* and the *Sons of Ham*.[64] This list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but it does give a sense of how attestations to "real" Southern origins and claims to blackness ("Sons of Ham," etc.) were very much the norm in turn of the century companies.

While the majority of minstrel companies were still under the direction of white men, Charles B. Hick's Original Georgia minstrels and McCabe and Young's Minstrels both boasted African American performers, managers, and owners starting in the 1870s– but women were not part of these troupes until the turn of the century. In their exhaustive study of late nineteenth century black music and performance, Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff posit that black minstrel companies represented a large departure from earlier white versions, in that they were

[63] Sotriopoulos, *Staging Race,* 22.
[64] "The Stage," *Freeman,* November 22, 1902, 5.

not "simply 'delineating' black character and culture, they were manifesting black talent and creativity, and they stretched out, almost subconsciously, with innovations."[65] Abbot and Seroff likewise point out that these minstrel troupes very often were not advertised or included in the arts sections of African American newspapers until the advent of ragtime after 1895, "when ragtime confirmed their 'legitimacy' in the marketplace."[66] Even with such "innovations" and an increasing acceptance amongst the black community, there were other battles to confront.

When African American performers toured as part of a black troupe, they were wildly popular within the black community – even as theatre managers across the country attempted to relegate black audience members to the balcony and limit their presence at the shows. Sotiropoulous gives special attention to vaudeville and circuit houses, detailing how black performers often had to rely on the African American community for food and shelter (though the whites paid for the performance and applauded), and how blacks sometimes used these theatre-going experiences to "challenge Jim Crow seating rules."[67] African Americans were deemed second-class consumers within the white-dominated industry; major urban center could not boast of black controlled professional houses until 1905, when the Pekin opened in Chicago, and it was not until 1914 that plans for a formal black circuit, combining all the major black theatres in the country, were underway by S.H. Dudley. [68] By 1909, a writer for the *Afro-American* spoke of the lack of theatre houses catering to blacks. The writer claimed that the "colored people spend over four thousand dollars per week on theatrical performances, and that in spite of the fact that in six of them the Negroes are restricted to the galleries and in the seventh, negroes are not admitted to any part of the house."[69] Of course, whether or not these statistics were legitimate is hard to say: as Kennard Williams wrote in the *Afro-American* in 1925, the "details or exact statistics are not available" for turn-of-the-century theatre concerning

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[65] Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight,* 65.
[66] Ibid., xiv.
[67] Ibid., 71.
[68] "Planning for a Chain of Theatres," *Afro-American*, August 22, 1914, 1.
[69] R. Thompson, "Negro Theatre and Office Building," *Afro-American*, July 3, 1909, 1.

black attendance, and thus Williams said they must "depend on the memory of those living in Baltimore Town in that period."[70] Williams does state, however, that African Americans in Baltimore were made to sit in the gallery, *except* when a "colored troupe" came into town and they were allowed to take some of the orchestra seats; it seems these same troupes were a boon for scalpers, who knew that black shows would be in high demand with limited seats for African Americans. Williams suggest whites also shared the gallery space, and that "fist fights were often engaged" during "white productions," wherein the "white battlers often succeeded in extinguishing the house lights and, by rubbing heads, readily distinguished colored scalps, which they straightway proceeded to crack with blackjacks."[71] It seems likely that, given the race relations throughout the late nineteenth/early twentieth century United States, the potential for violence was an accepted fact of black theatre-going.

The touring conditions for African American performers held even more unpredictability than commercial white ventures – and there was certainly a great deal more prejudice overall. As mentioned above, black performers often had to rely on the good will of the black community to provide food and shelter during touring – even as the interior of the house was divided between blacks in the gallery and whites in the orchestra. For many troupes, the main source of income came from one night stands in small towns or cities, some of whom refused to house the performers or threatened them with violence if they stayed overnight. Tom Fletcher provides details from his touring with Howard's Novelty Colored Minstrels troupe in the late 1880s, claiming they appeared mostly in small "town halls" with "quart bottles for footlights."[72] When there were no black folk in town or they "were not well equipped to take care of anybody outside of their own families," the performers slept in "halls, opera houses, and railroad stations."[73] The contracts were unforgiving, the wages (mostly) poor (Fletcher claims he got five dollars a week

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[70] Kennard Williams, "Baltimore Has Long Boasted Regular Theatre Fans," *Afro-American*, January 17, 1925, 5.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Fletcher, *100 Years,* 10.
[73] Ibid., 13.

and sent three of them home, compared to his father's $9.50 a week wages[74]), the listings of obituaries or illnesses during tours were common – the touring life of a nineteenth-century black performer did not offer stability or many avenues for success.[75] If the company was successful enough, they had their own railroad car to "insulate…themselves from the Jim Crow pitfalls of public conveyance and lodging."[76] When Fletcher joined the popular Georgia Minstrels in 1897, the troupe had just such a car so as to avoid violence in the "towns…of the Southern states" which were "very rough to us because the Civil War was still pretty fresh in their minds."[77] Immediately after performing, the troupe would return to the car via public parade (just as they came in), and leave that night – hiring an engine if there were no outgoing trains to hitch onto just to ensure they were out that evening.[78] Though there were often African Americans in these towns, they were presumably descendants of ex-slaves in that area and it was "taken for granted that they 'knew their place.'"[79] Black minstrel performers came with no such assurances, and Fletcher claims to have seen signs that "which read, 'Nigger, Read and Run.' And sometimes there would be added 'and if you can't read, run anyhow.'"[80] Considering the overwhelming prejudice and escape tactics performers had to take, it is little wonder that Williams and Walker (as is often recounted) signed a contract that ensured they would not venture south of the Mason-Dixon.

But there were also attempts to prosper in such conditions. In advertising touring schedules, it becomes clear that there was a sense of community that sought to protect and advance the performers. The *Freedman* printed letters and reports from minstrel companies and touring performers, including everything from next stops, to thanks to local hosts, to news of who was the new stage carpenter of a show, well wishes to those at home, birth

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[74] Ibid., 9-13.
[75] Hatch, "American Minstrelsy in Black and White," in *History*, 118-120.
[76] Abbott & Seroff, *Out of Sight,* 105.
[77] Fletcher, *100 Years,* 57.
[78] Ibid., 58.
[79] Ibid., 57.
[80] Ibid.

announcements, illness reports, what the troupes witnessed as they toured the country, successful shows, to soliciting collections for a burial fund for a recently deceased actor. This is not to say that there was not competition: amongst the minstrel and plantation troupes, there were fierce battles for commercial dominance. Though the market for theatrical entertainment reached a fevered pitch during the Gilded Age and early Progressive Era and the increasing incorporation of culture provided affective circuits of distribution, the exploited workers – and doubly exploited black workers, due to the victory of white supremacy via the second civil war – were at the mercy of a system that could provide tenuous employment and trying work conditions.

Operating under the auspices of a concert or jubilee troupe, acts like Sissierette Jones or the Hyers sisters attempted to bring sophistication and change hierarchical and class-based assessments of black performances – but, throughout the 1890s, audiences preferred plantation shows and minstrel-influenced pieces, until "for the most part, the public no longer cared to differentiate between a minstrel and a jubilee singer."[81] Jubilee singers initially toured after the war as autonomous troupes, but they were increasingly added into plantation spectacles. The incorporation of jubilee singers into versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would seem to corroborate the lack of public distinction between minstrelsy and black folk forms with classical aspirations. Jubilee singers were also part of the outdoor plantation spectacle *Black America* (1895) that claimed to present a realistic exhibition of the plantation South, even though jubilee singers were a post-war phenomena. Indeed, the classical singer Sissieretta Jones became known as the "Black Patti," who could not even maintain an autonomous identity when singing opera but had instead to be referenced via a white Italian singer. The inability for the white public to reconcile European classical singing with blackness led many to "categorize these performances as minstrel shows rather than artistic experiences."[82] Sissieretta Jones, in the year of *Plessy v.*

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[81] Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, xi.
[82] Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Marian Anderson and 'Sonic Blackness' in American Opera," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (September 2011): 651.

Ferguson ruling, realizing concert venue appearances alone would not sustain her career, was enticed to form the Black Patti's Troubadours, a hit on the minstrel circuit.[83]

Even if the touring and professional circumstances were not always ideal, there were many African Americans outside of the industry who served as a reminder and comparison for the economic struggles within the larger black community. While the *Clorindy* chorus troupe was playing in Omaha in 1899, clothes and jewelry began disappearing from their dressing rooms; a "negro" who "served in the late war with the Ninth cavalry" was selling the goods to a local pawn shop – arrested in uniform, he "said he stole the stuff to keep from starving."[84] If black war veterans were driven to such desperate measures, one can only imagine how other African Americans faced extreme economic hardship brought about and compounded by social and cultural prejudices.

However, black artists still smuggled in and negotiated a variety of alternative methods and meanings beyond the minstrel stage. If depictions of slavery were what white audiences expected and desired to consume, African American performers found ways to work within and against the juridical and cultural expectations of the victorious white supremacist notions of the second civil war. The idealized images of slavery were linked to the plantation and its humble slave abodes in popular culture, and this trope is a good entry point for closer scrutiny. The plantation cabin and its surrounding environs might have been the setting, but the economic practices and political messages conveyed a very different set of memories than those most likely enjoyed by white audiences.

Professionalizing the Plantation

The cabin and the abolitionist symbolism behind the one presented in the original manifestation of Uncle Tom's abode were reconfigured drastically for the post-war popular stage. For white audience members, corporality was a material condition of blackness. Because

[83] Ibid., 652.
[84] "Thieves at the Orpheum," *Omaha World Herald*, February 2, 1899, 5.

race is a construct – and, when theorizing through Falguni Sheth and Ian Haney Lopez – maintained by laws and functions merely as a technology of the state, this locating and inscribing of black bodies with an authenticity rooted in corporality is highly problematic (as are all searches for "authenticity"). The materiality and fixedness of race projected onto black bodies were buttressed by props and settings in performance. In non-Tom sites of memories tapping into the "primal scene" of slavery, the consumption of materials – the sets, the food, the costumes presented – were central to unpacking the plantation cabin. These symbols were often re-appropriated or invested with other symbols, whether explicitly unpacked as such within the production itself or by covert implication. The plantation and the enslavement it entails becomes the unexpected site of success, professionally and dramaturgically, for many African American characters. While only a handful of characters actually yearn for a return to the primal scene itself, there are other ways that the plantation is invested with ironically empowering meanings.

Often considered the first black musical comedy, the Hyers Sisters Company's production of white playwright Joseph Bradford's *Out of Bondage* (1876) begins with a humble plantation cabin. The abode of Uncle Eph and Aunt Naomi is supposed to be decorated (as stipulated by playwright Joseph Bradford) with "coon skins and possum skins stretched upon the walls," onions and bacon dangling from the ceiling.[85] Uncle Eph, clad in an old blue coat his master bestowed upon him, and Kaloolah (Emma Hyers) have comical tiffs over the consumption of a possum tail, creating opportunities for Kaloolah to sing for her supper. The women and children likewise trick Uncle Eph out of his whiskey. Narcisse (Anna Hyers) does not frown upon the surroundings or the possum feast, though Kaloolah (echoing Topsy's playful personality throughout) teases her sister Narcisse for being a "high-toned darkey what lives up

[85] Joseph Bradford, *Out of Bondage*, in *African American Theater: Out of Bondage (1876) and Peculiar Sam; or, the Underground Railroad (1879)*, ed. Eileen Southern (New York: Garland, 1994), 5. The pagination I use when referencing *Out of Bondage* is the play-text numbering rather than the page within Southern's edition. The play was originally entitled *Out of the Wilderness* during its first appearances.

to de big house mid de white folks" eating "mince pie an' molasses candy."[86] These humble surroundings are threatened externally – the second act is set outside the cabin – as Uncle Eph worries about the advancing Union army. The freed young characters board a steamboat north, and five years elapse between this and the final act; the children now live in Boston – the comfortable interior of their shared home, including a piano, are shown – working as Jubilee singers. The plantation and its environs are not forgotten, however: Uncle Eph brings Kaloolah a possum tail, and Narcissa a dried bud from a rose bush she planted by the cabin (Eph mourns that "eberything else about de old place seemed a goin to ruin an' decay dat little bush still blossomed fresh an' green").[87] Uncle Eph is surprised by the surroundings and their changed appearances (he seems suspicious that they bought their clothing) and voices disbelief that "you call singin' work" or that "people up yere at de Norf pay money to hear cullud folks sing."[88] Narcisse assures him that "they have found that freedom does not mean idleness," that "neither man nor woman has any right to live in the world without striving to make it better."[89] The plantation is perhaps left behind but they all carry it with them: Uncle Eph and Aunt Naomi in their small symbolic gifts, and the younger generation in using their black folk experiences – namely, their communal singing – to find material and professional success. In addition, the singing that procures monetary support also paves the way for equality: at the concert, Uncle Eph and Aunt Naomi can sit with the "white folks" in the audience, because at the churches where the children sing there is "no distinction of color" and all "men are free and equal."[90] Thus, the skills and environment of the plantation cabin made their success and eventual racial equality possible in the post-war space of *Out of Bondage*.

Managed by the Redpath Lyceum Bureau based in Boston, the Hyers Sisters Company's depiction of racial progress only toured in areas traditionally aligned with the Union (the

[86] Ibid., 7-8.
[87] Ibid., 50.
[88] Ibid., 56.
[89] Ibid., 52.
[90] Ibid., 60.

northeast, midwest, and western portions of the country). There is record of at least one later Southern performance: they appeared in Henderson, Kentucky in 1890, to an "intelligent and appreciative audience, though not as large as it should have been."[91] Much of this was likely to do with the caliber of entertainment they offered, versus minstrel shows – the black reporter notes that "our white citizens did not turn out as well as was hoped," but that it was "the first time Henderson Afro-Americans took seats any where in the audience without molestation."[92] The lines were at times improvised so the manuscript written by Bradford was not necessarily preserved very strictly in performance.[93] As troupe members varied, this is only logical: it does seem that the general structure and plot persisted regardless of personnel changes. The Hyers Sisters often played to mixed race audiences and were widely respected: one spectator called their work "genteel fun," and this indeed seemed to be the general consensus amongst audiences.[94] A Portland paper assured audiences that it the Hyers Sisters were "worthy of cordial and unreserved patronage," further claiming that the work "is not theatrical," distancing their work from the popular stage.[95] One Chicago reporter made further distinction between the early Hyers Sisters' work and minstrelsy: "refreshing, after the years we have had of coarse, vulgar Ethiopian song-and dance men, who have made the very idea of negro interprets on the stage repugnant."[96] A survey of the reviews underlines the class-based claims of gentility and respectability – as Hill and Hatch point out, they were "models of propriety and discretion, they worked hard, achieved much, and were admired by all with whom they collaborated."[97]

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[91] "The Doings of Afro-Americans in Henderson, KY," *Freeman*, September 20, 1890, 7.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Southern, *African American Theatre,* xv-xvi.
[94] "The Hyers Sisters," *Kalamazoo Gazette*, April 9, 1878, 1.
[95] "The Hyers Sisters," *Portland Daily Press*, June 18, 1878, 3.
[96] "The New Chicago," *Inter Ocean*, February 26, 1878, 4.
[97] Hill, "The Civil War to the *Creole Show,"* 77.

Another narrative of escape from the plantation cabin was in circulation by both the Hyers Sisters and the Z.W. Sprague Company in the late 1870s and early 80s.[98] Known in a three act version as *The Slaves' Escape; or, the Underground Railroad* (performed by the Hyers Sisters) and a four act *Peculiar Sam; or, the Underground Railroad* (with a few performances by the Hyers troupe, but mostly presented by the Z.W. Sprague Company), both were written by African American writer Pauline Hopkins.[99] *Slaves' Escape* ran for a longer time period and was seen by more audiences in the Boston area; it was also presented during the 1880 showing as part of a "large-scale plantation spectacle" with black performers harvesting cotton.[100] Jessica Metzer argues that this opening plantation differed from minstrel shows and other spectacles - there were "five solemn songs and no dialogue," setting a "somber tone," as Jim surveys the work and "takes on a menacing character" and he threateningly snaps his whip at the slaves.[101]

Peculiar Sam adds a post-slave space and possibility for dramatic resolution that is not present in *Slaves' Escape*. In this more-published and anthologized (but apparently less-produced and consumed) version, the initial plantation cabin where the action begins is juxtaposed with the free-peoples' house in Canada. The older fugitives, Mammy (Sam's mother) and Caesar (a free black man who aided fugitives) sit in their new abode, but think back to their Southern homes. Mammy hears an old minstrel song and "feels so bad, kase dey carries me way bact to dem good ol' times dat'll neber return… I kin seem to see de fiel's ob cotton, an' I kin

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[98] Jessica Metzler, "'Course I Knows Dem Feet!;" Minstrelsy and Subversion in Pauline E. Hopkins's *Slaves' Escape; or the Underground Railroad,*" in *Loopholes and Retreats: African American Writers and the Nineteenth Century*, eds. John Cullen Gruesser and Hanna Wallinger (Wien: Lit, 2009).
[99] Metzler compared the unpublished *Slaves' Escape* to the published and anthologized *Peculiar Sam*: a Quaker character aids the fugitives in *Slaves' Escape* and does not feature the final resolution scene - instead, *Slaves' Escape* closes with a tableau of the fugitives crossing the river mid-action. It is not mentioned whether or not the Quaker was played by a white actor or a black actor in whiteface. Metzler argues that *Slaves' Escape* require more attention, as seen in Boston widely from 1879-1881 and was better publicized than an 1879 midwestern tour of the four act *Peculiar Sam* by the Z. W. Sprague troupe. See Metzler, "'Course I Know," 104.
[100] Ibid., 104.
[101] Ibid., 105.

seem to smell de orange blossoms dat growed on de trees down de carriage drive."[102] Caesar likewise asks to that she "bury me at ol' Marser's feet, under de 'Nolin tree."[103] They are alone in their nostalgia, as the younger children have all embraced the opportunities of this new post-war world: Sam (played by Sam Lucas in the original Hyers Sisters production), who began the play dancing a jig in the cabin with his fellow slaves, has received a formal education and has just been elected as a congressman from Ohio. Of the other fugitives, his longtime mulatto sweetheart Virginia is a professional singer, and his sister Juno a school teacher. Virginia was forcibly wed back on the plantation to the once-cruel mulatto overseer Jim, but is released from this obligation when Jim appears, penitent, at the Canada house. The celebration of Sam and Virginia's impending union calls for a quadrille – but Sam interrupts it and asks that the audience "excuse me for laying aside the dignity of an elected M.C., and allow me to appear before you once more as peculiar Sam of the old underground railroad."[104] In his appearance as Sam with the fourth act ending, Sam Lucas's roots as a minstrel performer and his well-known fondness for and possession of diamonds would have served as a reminder that black folk styles cultivated in slavery could enable him to wear diamonds as he danced upon the late nineteenth-century stage.

Cabins were likewise prominent features in the plantation spectacles *South Before the War* (1892) and *Black America* (1895), and drew upon other materials linked to slavery and authenticity. The long-running *South Before the War* did boast company members who were "actual field hands from the cotton belt" according to one paper; such performers could achieve the "animated rural simplicity" and were shown "living in a village of plantation cabins," with real cotton on the stage.[105] The production began in Kentucky in the early 1890s, and Tim

[102] Pauline E. Hopkins, *Peculiar Sam, or, The Underground Railroad*, 1879. *Black Drama 1850 to Present* (Alexander Press, 2013), 30.
[103] Ibid., 31.
[104] Ibid., 37.
[105] "Plays and Players," *Boston Globe*, December 14, 1895, 18.

Brooks claimed that Billy McClain actually had a large hand in starting the show with John Whalen and Harry Martell – it continued touring the country until 1901.[106]

When the production appeared in DC, the theatre reporter for the *Post* assured audiences that the "condition of the Southern darky…was not one of extreme misery" and that there "were times when he was happy."[107] *The South Before the War* represented the "happy hour, brief though it may have been" that slaves on the "old plantation of the sunny South…forgot their serfdom and gave themselves up to pleasure."[108] Though a writer for a Boston paper called it a "comedy drama," it seems clear that it was more a series of specialty sketches: there were "jubilee songs and dances, buck and wing dancing, visions of an old-time camp meeting…a cake walk, and a pickaninny band."[109] The four major divisions of the show were, according to the Boston writer, a "plantation during the cotton picking season…a landing on the Mississippi river, at which the old river craft Robert E. Lee arrives…a camp meeting back on the bayou," concluding with a cake walk. It seems that Billy McClain would procure talent at various stops, and this four-part format certainly provided flexibility in terms of adding specialty dancers, quartets, and other performers along the way. Whatever plot did exist – particularly if it was romantic in tenor – was most likely depicted by the white performers included. One of the company's quartets, the Standard Quartette, co-recorded in 1894 with a white soprano in the show – the "first interracial recordings ever marketed."[110] It seems that *South Before the War* offered immense opportunities to performers like those in the Standard Quartette: they had employment during the season and the ability to re-join on later touring legs after the summer break, and the Standard was given a chance to record multiple times based upon their involvement in the show. Though there is no extant script to confirm what political meanings

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[106] Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2004), 93.
[107] "Not for Twenty Dollars," *Washington Post*, February 26, 1893, 14.
[108] Ibid.
[109] *Boston Globe*, December 15, 1895, 18.
[110] Wilson, 95.

may or may not have appeared in these sites of slave memories, the opportunities for professionalization embedded within the multi-season touring company are apparent.

By the time Billy McClain and his wife/performing partner Cordelia McClain took up residence in Ambrose Park in Brooklyn as part of the *Black America* plantation installation, their strides in the performance industry had translated into diamonds for them as well. A reporter for the *New York Times* called them the "aristocracy of the place"; he wore a "big cluster" of diamonds, she a pair of "solitaires."[111] The reporter further describes the plantation abodes with tongue-in-cheek fashion, calling them "plantation villas" with a "family washbasin…hanging from the front of each family mansion," and the bachelor camps boasting "antique rubber boots, with an old broom tucked in."[112] Unlike these structures, the McClains had "curtains and draperies, carpets and mattings, and number of big trunks for her clothes," though there was no room for a piano – a chicken coop also stood at hand for breakfast eggs.[113] More than any other production explored with sites of slave memories, the materials and settings of *Black America* were detailed extensively by newspapers – Northern audiences in New York and Boston seemingly deemed this a truly immersive and authentic plantation experience.

While the cotton in *South Before the War* was commented upon, the cotton plants in *Black America* received even more attention – as the latter presented a growing, living field plopped down into a Brooklyn park. There was quite a bit of consternation over the fate of *Black America*'s cotton: it was not sure that the transplanted crop would survive Northern conditions, but the weather turned hot and there was no need to present cotton bales – the plants survived to convey the "reviving thrill of real plantation life all through the big park encampment."[114] The real cotton fields and, if the promotional materials are to be believed, 150 cabins used for set

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[111] "Fun for the Darkies," *New York Times,* June 2, 1895, 16. The McClains met, the paper claims, while she was buck-and-wing dancing in the "real old plantation style."
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

pieces in the outdoor show *Black America* reinforced the hundreds of slave specimens on display. There was also a cotton gin and press, which the producers "secured…after a great deal of trouble and expense," assuring spectators that it is an authentic piece from "twelve miles south of Huntsville, Georgia," borrowed from a plantation owner only after they gave him a newer model.[115] The press, the promotional pamphlet boasts, is "over one hundred years old, and the Negroes who operate this machine were brought direct from the same plantation."[116] Thus, not only could the visitors to the Brooklyn plantation see an antebellum machine worked and maintained by slavery, but – it is implied – descendants of those that were enslaved to and by the machine as well. Webb likewise seizes upon this link, arguing that "by inferring its performers were both actual plantation workers and slaves of the past, *Black America* effectively collapsed history to produce a generalized, transhistorical African American identity."[117]

The cotton gin and press, the crop itself, and the cabins all served to reinforce – to white spectators – the authenticity of the black bodies presented in *Black America*. One Boston reviewer noted that "the native colored people of the south possess sweet, strong, and pleasing singing voices," assuring attendees that the cast was "every one born in the southern states, and every one can sing because it was born in them."[118] Since Billy McClain himself was born in Indianapolis (not to mention many more cast members were likely born above the Mason-Dixon as well), the claim that *every one* of the performers was born in the South was clearly and patently false. That probably would not have deterred this reviewer, who goes on to make a more definite link to these younger performing black bodies – most of them too young to have experienced slavery first-hand – and the older, withering bodies of the ex-slaves: "the negroes, both male and female…are distinctly representative of a type of the colored race which is rapidly

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[115] *The Official Guide and SongBook of Black America*, Harris Collection of American Plays, John Hay Library, Brown University.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Webb, "Authentic Possibilities," 75.
[118] "Drama and Music," *Boston Globe*, August 11, 1895, 18.

decreasing in numbers and eventually will become extinct."[119] Other aspects of the "real plantation life" were on display, including a "fat black mammy, with a red handkerchief on her head" who "sits outside one of the little cabins, knitting," near a "dusky damsel, all in pale blue" who "makes a picture of herself standing in the square frame of an open cabin window."[120] Other materials circulated through the fields: "love philters and charms for alienated affections" caused by the above "dusky damsel" types, and the "shattered hearts" left behind by the sharp-looking 9th US Calvary who drilled as part of the performance.[121] These materials, of course, serve to both belittle and sexualize black romantic attachments – suggesting that such encounters can be cured with fantastical potions, and that these men and women are on sexual display.

The superstition, the other-worldliness that was rooted in the black body and its surroundings was also available to *Black America* patrons: this same *New York Times* attendee suggests there was "an atmosphere of luckiness about the plantation that is sure to be imparted to every one who enters its charmed circle."[122] Beyond the love potions, there were other "charms" to be acquired, including a "rabbit's foot" that "must be taken from animals caught at the proper time and in the proper place and manner to make it effective," and a "heart-shaped musk bag" with "mysterious ingredients" protecting the bearer "against sickness, the wiles and deceptions of the Evil One, and bring all manner of success to those coming within the range of the power." The lingering Otherness within the black body, of dark countries with unknown magic and powers, was thus scattered amongst the plantation settings: as if these rabbits were imported from some black voodoo-esque ritual, rather than simply Brooklyn bunnies that happened to wander (to a perhaps unhappy fate) into a plantation installation.

All these materials – cotton, chicken coops, cabins, red handkerchiefs, boots, soldiers' uniforms, cotton gins, etc. – were meant to prepare and charm the audience for the performance

[119] "Fun for the Darkies," *New York Times*.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

in the arena. The souvenir program for the show reveals another dimension of the enormity of this project: an immense amount of talent was hired for this exhibition. Indeed, Billy McClain conceived of *Black America* as an off-season employment opportunity and a "training ground for the newly emerging professional entertainers as well as to maintain black management and artistic control."[123] The Grand Entree featured the plantation inhabitants marching in to a band, though the "soldierly appearance…causes a ludicrous effect, for they become carried away with the strains of the music, and they assume their natural swinging gait."[124] Then came a series of quartette performances, along with minstrel songs and spirituals with the whole company (such as "See That Watermelon"). The third part of the show featured the 9th US Calvary, followed by Charles Johnson's "grotesque evolutions," a "CROSS COUNTRY RIDE," by "Colored Jockeys on Thoroughbred Kentucky Horses," more featured song acts, and buck and wing dancing.[125] The range and number of performers incorporated into such a spectacle provided a whole host of black artists a "training ground" where they could live and work together – performing in two shows a day – for an entire summer season.

At first glance, some of the acts mentioned above are reminiscent of a glorified minstrel show, or a more expansive and elaborate conceptualization of *South Before the War*: specialty acts within a fair-like "anthropological" setting that authenticates blackness only through the memory of slavery and the rural Southern, poverty-like conditions of sharecroppers working on the old plantation. However, as Webb claims, there are "possibilities for both racist and empowering readings of African American identity and culture" in *Black America*, and it is within the chorus numbers, with historical tableaux, that the empowering sites of memories are located.[126] During these final numbers, the chorus sang explicitly Union war songs to "giant…portraits of such white Union patriots as John Brown, General Sherman, General Grant,

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[123] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 141.
[124] *Official Guide*.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Webb, "Authentic Possibilities," 74.

and Abraham Lincoln, and one equally giant portrait of a black patriot, Frederick Douglass."[127] Thus, even amongst the heady plantation nostalgia, *Black America* gave its audience a strong dose of emancipationist imagery and songs before releasing them back out into the transplanted cotton fields outside the arena. The costumes of the black cavalry and the lingering images of Union heroes were political reminders that slavery was, indeed, over.

Whereas the plantation setting and entertainments similar to *South Before the War* and *Black America* were offered up in *Darkest America* (1896), there was an end scene showing the "progress" of the African American race. The bulk of the show featured entertainments like a forty-person dancing contest, buck and wing dancing, "many attractive vocal and instrumental selections, specialties, and marches, a crowd of old-time camp-meeting 'shouters,' with their weird hymns, several 'hoodoo' charm-workers, a colored brass band and a lot of pickaninnies."[128] It does indeed sound like an attempt to "show the home life of the American negro as it was on the plantation before the war"; but there is a different ending more reminiscent of *Peculiar Sam* – "one of the old-time slaves has become a Congressman," and the show closes amidst the "refinement" of Washington, D.C.[129] The all-black cast, including Sam Lucas and, for at least one season, Billy and Cordelia McClain, toured the North and South; of course, Sam Lucas, born as a free person in Ohio, was undoubtedly one of the many cast members who negated an enthusiastic Kentucky reviewer exclaiming that "all the people who take part in the performance are genuine Southern negroes."[130] Amidst the "farce, drama, vaudeville, and opera" acts that one West Virginia reviewer noted in the show, he noted that the "colored man is rapidly coming to the front in special forms of stage entertainment."[131] Unlike other claims of the cast's geographical origins, this was undoubtedly true: African American performers had generated and created a market for distinctly black forms of performance.

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[127] Ibid., 80.
[128] "Amusements," *Kalamazoo Gazette*, April 25, 1897, 4; "Darkest America," *Sun*, November 10, 1896, 10.
[129] "Theatre Tonight," *Morning Herald*, September 22, 1896, 6.
[130] Ibid.
[131] "'Darkest America,'" *Wheeling Register*, September 17, 1897, 6.

Within this initial plantation setting, a counter-narrative to *Black America* was likewise depicted – the black person elevated "from plantation to palace."[132] Whereas Billy McClain's plantation remained in the northeast, this one created by white minstrel performer Al G. Field toured the South, presenting a black man in the national legislature: considering that a newspaper from Lexington, Kentucky, printed that plot conclusion, it can be assumed that this ending most likely remained intact during the Southern leg of the tour.

The primal scene of slavery is most clearly articulated in both an emancipationist vision and a return to the plantation as a melodramatic space of innocence in *Our Old Kentucky Home* (1898). The co-authors – actress Henrietta Vinton Davis and journalist John Edward Bruce – begin their melodrama at a slave market in New Orleans, where old black women gossip about the upcoming sale of the beautiful creole slave Clothilde. The auction scene is brutal in its depiction of the chattel, and more sexually explicit and condemnatory of slave sales than other dramatic representations. Thomas Robson believes the "protracted slave auction scene" is central to the play, as it "establishes the emotional background against which the rest of the play will function."[133] It does indeed squarely set this production within the abolitionist and emancipationist visions of the war: slavery is the starting point of the war itself, which is depicted in the play as well. After Clothilde's sale (where she is marketed to "old bachelors" who might find her "otherwise useful"), she is presented to her new mistress on an idyllic Kentucky plantation.[134] The white members of the Knott family sit on a veranda surrounded by hammocks, attended by slaves while a "jolly quartette" serenades them from the lawn below with "Old Kentucky Home."[135] After many escapes, fights, and other escapades during the war by Clothilde and her sweetheart Basil, the two are reunited in Washington, DC, during the final army review at the war's close.

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Thomas Robson, "A More Aggressive Plantation Play: Henrietta Vinton Davis and John Edward Bruce Collaborate on *Our Old Kentucky Home*," *Theatre History Studies* 32 (2012): 126.
[134] Henrietta Vinton Davis and John Edward Bruce, *Our Old Kentucky Home*, unpublished typescript, John Edward Bruce Papers, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library, 11.
[135] Ibid., 12.

In the concluding act, Basil and Clothilde have bought the old plantation in Kentucky where they met. The ex-slaves prepare for the couple's return: they kill chickens for barbecue and ensure there is plenty of apple brandy, striking up with "I Would Not Be a Slave" when the married couple first arrive, but then segueing into "My Old Kentucky Home." This is the same song that was being sung when Clothilde first arrived, but the circumstances are quite different: there is not a master, flesh trader, or another single white character, and Robson reads the song's concluding line of "for the Old Kentucky Home far away," to suggest the once enslaved chorus is establishing "historical distance from the cruelty of plantation life."[136] The plantation belongs, in full, to the slaves now: even the silver the Knotts buried during the war is Basil's, according to Aunt Mandy, as he "certn'y is ole Marster's own son."[137] She begs pardon for this indelicate observation: "You mus' scuse me chillums for mentioning dese things, but I'se got a long remembrance, I is" (it appears Knott, Jr., learned his father's tricks).[138] It is this same "long remembrance" that leads Basil to share the land amongst all of them, threatening to toss anyone off the property who tries to pay him rent. The plantation, he tells those gathered, "is your home and mine, our labor and toil has enhanced its value, and made it what it is, the most valuable plantation in Old Kentucky."[139]

Charles Sager – later the stage manager at Chicago's Pekin theatre – created a pageant called *The Negro* (1899) as part of Emancipation Day celebrations in Hannibal, Missouri, using "the best home talent" of local Missouri African Americans.[140] There was a corps of professional actors to supplement the extras: Henrietta Vinton Davis (previously mentioned co-author and star of *Our Old Kentucky Home*), and Albert Young was a tenor soloist. With such a clear link to the Emancipation Proclamation, there is little question as to where the politics of the piece lie.[141]

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[136] Robson, "More Aggressive Plantation Play," 136.
[137] Davis & Bruce, *Our Old Kentucky Home*, 50.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 51.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Hill, "New Vistas: Plays, Spectacles, Musicals, and Opera," in *History,* 140. Hill claims an earlier piece, *The South in Slavery,* that Sager produced was most likely adapted into this Missouri production, though

Sager's production bears some remarkable similarities to Billy McClain's unpublished *The South Before and After the War* and W.E.B. Du Bois's later pageant *The Star of Ethiopia* (1913); all of these featured emancipation as a seminal event in the history of African American progress, ending in an optimistically patriotic statement of social and political advancement.[142] Sager was sought out by the black lodges of the Knights of Pythias in Indiana to stage *Negro* for charitable ends, echoing in some ways the experiences of Samuel Muscroft and his *Drummer Boy* staged in that city decades earlier; like Muscroft, Sager as author/auteur drew upon the "material at his hand;" the cast of "one hundred or more persons" were all Indianapolis residents.[143] Correspondents for the *Freeman* could hardly contain their delight, but one author in particular must not have been aware of Muscroft's earlier efforts, as he/she declared that Indianapolis had "never seen" such a sight before.[144] Of course this is Muscroft with a difference: the cast in this case was black, rather than white GAR veterans. A reporter for the black newspaper declared the production had an "educative value, equally important to either race as it shows the remarkable strides made by the Negro race in a third of a century."[145] There were only ten days of rehearsing to prepare for the two performances; two of the first three parts featured Southern scenes with "plantation songs and antics," and the last was set in a court in Dahomey.[146] In an important departure from earlier productions beginning in the context of slavery, Sager chose to begin with a traditional plantation scene on a Mississippi levee – but in 1865, "just after the close of the war," when the "proclamation of freedom is made and the slave rejoice with singing, dancing,

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he calls it only a "pageant" and does not mention that locals were used as extras and performers. "The Principal Events of a Busy Week," *Freeman*, September 2, 1899, 2. It also seems possible that Sager adapted this for a "spectacular melodrama" now called *Darkness in Dawn* that appeared in Chicago in 1901, a "panorama of black progress" in three acts. Thomas Bauman, "Enterprise and Identity: Black Music, Theater, and Print Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago," in *Music and the Cultures of Printing*, ed. Kate VanOrden (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 210.

[142] There is no extant script for Sager's production, but it seems that his narrative did not begin in Africa, unlike McClain's unpublished piece and W.E.B. Du Bois's later pageant.

[143] Ibid.

[144] "A Brilliant Audience," *Freeman*, April 28, 1900, 8.

[145] Ibid.

[146] "The Stage," *Freeman*, June 9, 1900, 5.

and all kinds of happy antics."[147] In the fictitious African space in the second act, the "court of the Queen of Dahomey" greets a US ambassador with marches of Amazons "in gorgeous panoply and graceful evolution;" the third act featured specialty acts.[148] The writer for the *Freeman* claims white press in the city was "unanimous in its very favorable criticism," suggesting that it was well received regardless of race. However, the extant information concerning *Negro* appears almost exclusively in the African American papers *Freeman* and *Recorder*, implying that this production was a politically progressive site of memory that fully articulated the emancipationist agenda. The repeated mention of charitable ends, the "ladies" and "gentlemen" that participated as amateur performers, and the focus on historical progress all place Sager's work squarely in the bourgeois theatrical tradition, with a racial twist. The *Recorder* did feature an ad for the Indianapolis production at English's Opera House, saying that the play showed the "progress of the Negro from 1865-1900" and exposed "the sterling qualities of 'the Negro' from the cotton field to a place of authority."[149] Though the show only appeared for two evenings, the *Colored American* likewise expressed excitement: "this Negro play by a Negro playwright, performed by Negroes, is a decidedly new feature of racial progress."[150] Along with promoting the emancipationist vision of the war and a narrative of racial progress, *The Negro* made some of the same moves towards bourgeois class aspirations as the amateur productions associated with the GAR explored in the prior chapter. Newspapers consistently mention the moral and pedagogical value of Sager's narrative, along with pointing out the elevated class status of those that were involved; they are not performers per se (with perhaps dubious morality), but "ladies" and "gentlemen" of the city – several articles even refer to Sager as a "professor." The show went on to appear in several other Midwest cities.[151] Different from the other plantation touchstones

[147] "The Stage and Its Devotees," *Colored American*, May 12, 1900, 5.
[148] Ibid.
[149] *The Negro* ad, *Recorder*, April 14, 1900, 8.
[150] "Bookmakers and Paragraphers," *Colored American*, June 23, 1900, 3.
[151] There were reported stops in St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and Kansas City. "The Stage," *Freeman*, January 27, 1900, 5.

for identity and professionalization, the site of memories produced in Sager's *Negro* made simultaneous claims to communal uplift.

Some of these same bourgeois aspirations were exactly what composer Will Marion Cook sought to mock in *Clorindy, or the Origins of the Cakewalk* (1898), critiquing, according to Jayna Brown, the "black bourgeois retention of the prim, well-behaved, Victorian models for civilized deportment and the black bourgeoisie's sensitivity to white approval."[152] It seems that *Clorindy* did not actually use much of Paul Laurence Dunbar's script due to the nature of the performance space – dialogue did not carry well at the Casino Theatre Roof Garden at 39th and Broadway, where patrons could come late after the other shows to eat and see music and dance routines.[153] As *Clorindy*'s libretto is lost, it is unclear if the piece that Will Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar originally concocted with many beers and raw steak one evening held emancipationist or slave memories; the title in and of itself would suggest some sort of connection to slave memories, as the cakewalk was often said to have originated as a mockery of white masters by competing slave dancers.[154] *Clorindy* broke down further professional barriers: it was the "first show with an all-black cast to perform on a white rooftop, and it was a rave success."[155]

In the musical comedy *The Southerners* (1904) – an interracial musical that played only one summer in New York – co-written by black classically-trained musician Will Marion Cook and white librettist Harry B. Smith, the plantation is in jeopardy when LeRoy Preston, joining the navy during war-time (the Confederate navy is most likely a safe assumption, but this is never made explicit), leaves his estate in the hands of his gambler cousin. Like earlier popular stage shows with white and black performers such as William Haworth's *On the Mississippi* or Dazey's *In Old Kentucky*, African Americans took on the chorus role to lend a racialized

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[152] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 146.
[153] Thomas Riis, *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890-1915* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1989), 80-81.
[154] See Sotriopoulos, *Staging Race*, 86 (for an account of the dinner); and Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 110 (for more on the origins of the cakewalk).
[155] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 147.

atmosphere to the proceedings, while white performers wore black-face for the speaking roles.[156] In this show, the slaves are offered their freedom by LeRoy after he enlists, but their blackface spokespeople reject the offer: "Is whiteside and hominy so dear you can't afford to feed us? De crops am good, and – well, to make a short story long we don't want no freedom."[157] Indeed, emancipation is not depicted as such, and Will Marion Cook's progressive politics are conveyed by other subtle messages: the black chorus entering singing "Swing Along," embedded with double-consciousness and an awareness of both black and white audiences as argued by David Krasner, subsuming the white julep-drinking chorus singing "I Love the Southland"; or a black celebration set in an explicitly post-emancipation setting for "Darktown Barbecue." Of course, having a mixed race cast in a Broadway house was in and of itself a feat; it was rumored that Will Marion Cook "supplied his darky aides with safety razors" and the audience members supposedly feared there would be some kind of racial violence – on opening night in New York after an out-of-town trial run in New Haven, they "tremble(d) in their seats, as if expecting another Pelée explosion."[158] There were no fights or tiffs to speak of (as the face-value of the racial politics in the show were rather toothless). By 1904, the heyday of plantation shows had somewhat diminished: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shows notwithstanding, there was a sharp decline in plantation shows (and in Civil War-related productions overall) compared to the late-nineteenth century. Whether this, or other factors, contributed to the production's comparatively short run is not clear, but it was clearly possible to stage a mixed race show on Broadway without razors or explosions.

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[156] In this case, actress Vinie Daly took on the role of slave girl Japonica, and popular blackface performer played Dandy Dan – who is called Uncle Daniel in the framing mechanism of the show, where LeRoy and Daniel sit together in the postwar years and reminisce.

[157] Will Marion Cook and Harry B. Smith, *The Southerners*, unpublished typescript, 1904. Copyright Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 9. It seems that the co-developers used the pen names Will Mercer and Richard Grant, as their respective biographers confirm. See Marva Griffin Carter, *Swing Along: The Musical Life of Will Marion Cook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and John Franceschina, *Harry B. Smith: Dean of American Librettists* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[158] "'The Southerners' in Black and White," *New York Times*, May 24, 1904, 9.

There are tantalizing pieces of evidence of other sites of slave memories; these were not often popular hits, and some never appeared outside the city of original production. However, these lingering traces suggest that other memories featuring slavery were being presented for audience consumption on theatrical stages. Errol Hill has culled what little lingers in the archives: for instance, John Ladue's *Under the Yoke; or Bond and Free* (1876) was revived in 1888 and 1890 after its original premiere, though little more is known about it beyond the inclusion of various specialty acts – its name of course suggests an emancipationist narrative.[159] A production *Servitude and Freedom* (1878), perhaps more "pageant than drama," appeared in Chicago, though little is recorded beyond this observation.[160] *Marcus, a Story of the South* (1896) bears similarities to *Peculiar Sam*: though *Marcus* differed with its mixed race casting drawn on its local Philadelphia citizens, the hero "rises from ragged colored boy to be a prominent lawyer."[161] Also like the Hyers Sisters' productions, the show closed with musical acts – some classical in nature, like the appearance of Joseph H. Douglass, the "grandson of the late Frederick Douglass, and who has achieved considerable reputation as a violin soloist."[162] It can only be assumed that there are other sites of memories, staged by and possibly for African Americans that featured slavery and emancipation.

Throughout these plantation-based sites of memories, there is a pervasive irony that may or may not have been realized by audiences and performers. By deploying slavery and the plantation, a forced labor system and its setting, as a performance trope, black performers were finally being compensated for their labor in a setting where they most certainly would not have been. Robson sees the use of "Old Kentucky Home" in the play *Our Old Kentucky Home* as a "transgressive act, resisting white oppression in an effort to assert black agency."[163] This sentiment seems to be at the heart of these plantation sites of memories: the land was worked

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[159] Hill, "Civil War to The Creole Show," 78.
[160] Ibid., 79.
[161] Ibid., 139; "The Stage," *Freeman*, November 21, 1896, 6.
[162] "The Stage," 6.
[163] Robson, "More Aggressive," 136.

and made valuable, invested with the labor of enslaved ancestors. Later black bodies performing amongst the transplanted cotton bolls and staged Southern landscapes of slavery garnered value from the ticket-buying patrons – especially white audience members – who flocked to these entertainments. Slavery, in an ironic representational turn, fiscally and professionally rewarded black performers for their labor; subverting white supremacist aims while meeting their expectations. It is a recuperative gesture, rather than a utopian space that is constructed: sites of enslavement could suddenly accumulate financial capital both by and for black bodies.

Staging Romance

Of the sites of memories surrounding slavery and emancipation in this chapter, there are staged romances between African American characters, though they are rarely the central force behind the narrative. In popular stage productions like *Secret Service* or *The Heart of Maryland*, the war served often as a spectacular backdrop and provided exciting plot devices (spies! telegraphs! women swinging from bell towers!). The war was the impediment (and often the enabler, as it made Northern and Southern characters first meet one another) to melodramatic romance matches. The heteronormative procreative space engendered by these romantic matches ensured the continuation of the white nation.

This same match-making was not the integral purpose of the forward-moving narrative in produced sites of slave memories. As Sotiropoulos points out, it was "nearly impossible for African Americans to depict romantic love onstage" due to "white racist expectation."[164] She includes a quote from James Weldon Johnson, who declares that a "love duet" in these comedies "had to be broadly burlesqued," as black romance was "taboo."[165] When producers and performers attempted to introduce a more dramatic, realistic, or foregrounded romantic plot

[164] Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 189.
[165] Ibid., 189-190.

between black characters, the show was either panned or was not accepted by white booking agents.[166]

There were, as with almost all things, exceptions. The love matches the characters strive for in these performances (when featured at all) are secondary because the primary objective was *political:* the ending of slavery. Slavery, as a condition, was an impediment to legitimizing marriage – both legally and culturally. When love *is* in the air, it is not furthered by the impassioned and heightened (and sometimes rather ridiculous) declarations heard in popular melodramas featuring white performers/characters; instead, the romance is presented as a bourgeois construct, an exercise in racial uplift. European Americans had long depicted blacks as being sexually primitive – animalistic, insatiable appetites, with little care as to their partner, failing to adhere to bourgeois norms of monogamy. Such depictions served to justify many sexualized acts of violence: the ripping apart of families on the auction block, the routine rape of black slave women, and – after the war – the lynching of thousands of black men in the name of protecting white women's virtue.

Since the sexuality of black men and women was regularly denigrated in white popular and political culture, there were strenuous efforts within the black community during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era to present images of bourgeois cultural values and practices. This resulted in a "particularly stringent version of gender, class, and sexual respectability" on the part of "race men" and "race women," with this respectability becoming a "central element in their campaigns for social justice."[167] Sexual respectability on the part of women was considered paramount in these matters. Since black female bodies were regularly violated when enslaved, recuperative measures would demand the assertion of autonomy and "sexual respectability": that the black woman's body was inviolate.

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[166] Cole and Johnson's *Red Moon* suffered from such criticism, and many performers confirmed that white theatre managers simply did not want shows that "omitted references to stereotypes." Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 190.

[167] Catherine Cocks, "Rethinking Sexuality in the Progressive Era," *Journal of Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 5, no 2 (April 2006): 108.

In the Hyers Sisters drama penned by Pauline Hopkins *Peculiar Sam* and in its alternate title *Slave's Escape, or the Underground Railroad*, the reason that Sam wants to leave the plantation is, at root, to protect Virginia. Jinny tells them all that she plans to flee their plantation home to escape an imminent abusive marriage with the mulatto overseer Jim. Forced into the marriage (which, of course, was not legally binding anyway during slavery), Virginia cowers in Jim's presence. He descends upon the plantation cabin and berates her for not attending to her domestic duties: "you're my wife now, an' yu's got to do as I says. Dars dat hoe cake aint baked for my super, an' dars my ol' pants wants mendin', an' you's got it to do…you's full o' airs, dats what you is, but I'll bring em out o' you, ef I has to tie you up an' give you a dozen lashes."[168] By nineteenth-century standards, a husband expecting such gendered domestic behaviors would not be radical, and Jim does not ask her beyond what would be anticipated: it is, of course, his abandonment of genteel principles and the threat of violence that makes his demands unseemly. Though sex remains unspoken, there are undeniably other spousal activities that Jim would force her to participate in as well.

The women of *Peculiar Sam* defend the black women's bodies: Juno, Sam's sister, with a physical weapon, Jinny with feminized virtue. When Jim follows the fugitives, Sam uses a pistol he stole from their master to subdue the overseer. Much to Sam's surprise, Juno turns out to be quite the shot and offers to guard Jim – she "used to go up inter Misses room, an' shoot dat ol' gun at de bedstead, an' Marse he, he, Marse an' Misse wonder how dat bedstead kamed full o' holes."[169] The fact that the "black female revolutionary" character, as Daphne Brooks labels Juno, shot the marital bed of their white owners carries its own latent symbolism: she mocks and attacks, by extension, a supposedly sacrosanct white institution, wherein white slave masters raped their black property to create mulatto property, and white mistresses often turned a blind eye to such goings-on.[170]

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[168] Hopkins, *Peculiar Sam*, 9.
[169] Ibid., 24.
[170] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 288.

Or, in the case of Clothilde in *Our Old Kentucky Home*, white Southern women viewed black female objects of desire as possible competition – the vicious treatment Harriet Jacobs endured at the hands of her jealous mistress, and countless other factual accounts confirm this behavior. When Courtney Knott, the heir of the plantation, approaches Clothilde, she claims that she is a "leddy" and rebuffs him; Courtney counters with a threat that makes it clear he rapes black women regularly on the plantation – "I will show you my leddy what we do to leddies of your kind in Kentucky. I'll make you bend, stiff as you are. If I don't, you'll be the first that ever got by me."[171] With, as Robson argues, the earlier auction scene that explicitly markets female slave flesh as sexually available, it was almost inevitable that Clothilde was going to face this conflict: but Clothilde does indeed manage to be "the first that ever got by" Courtney.

While there is credence to Robson's argument that this evasion on the part of Clothilde "reinforces her strength and prepares the audience for her eventual heroism," it is the interruption of a white woman that stalls the initial assault-in-progress.[172] In an earlier scene, Courtney is revealed to be wooing this woman and she is unpleasantly surprised though she does not immediately avenge herself on him. Instead, she expresses jealousy of (but not to) Clothilde and wallows in her own victimization: "this morning I find him making love with the same ardor to this slave. What a life of repression we women of the South have to lead when we find our most formidable rivals in the slave quarters."[173] Instead of sympathizing with a real victim – i.e., Clothilde and the thousands of black women that were raped during slavery and lived in real repression – she identifies with a white female disempowered victimhood, where slaves are "rivals" rather than those deserving her protection.[174]

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[171] Davis & Bruce, *Our Old Kentucky Home,* 16.
[172] Robson, "More Aggressive Plantation Play," 130.
[173] Davis & Bruce, *Our Old Kentucky Home*, 17.
[174] Later, Ms. Lamar gets her revenge - the Knott, Senior has claimed Union loyalties, but is receiving and sending letters to and from Courtney, a Confederate officer. Though the elder Knotts refuse to hand over the missives, Lamar produces them to a Union general, Martindale, and the family is marked as traitors. She and the Union general are later married, and attend the wedding of Clothilde and Basil at a New York AME church after the war's close.

Clothilde and Jinny both share a sense of "leddy"-like propriety: they both refuse to submit to sexual relations outside the bonds of matrimony. In fact, Jinny – who works in the "big house" and speaks without dialect – articulates that her marriage to Jim is not legally binding; she refers to it as a "so-called marriage," and Juno explains that the master asked Jim if he wanted to marry Jinny (Jim said yes), then asked Jinny if she wanted to marry Jim (she said no), and the Master ignored her response and simply declared, "You man an' wife, an Lor' hab mussy on yo soul." Even Juno concedes that "dat no kin' ob weddin.'"[175] However, later Jinny expresses doubt; even after years in Canada and Sam's running for Congress, Virginia believes "there can be nothing done until Jim is found."[176] This is a somewhat murky moment in Hopkins's story: even as they all discredit the legitimacy of the marriage to Jim, including Jinny, she refuses to marry Sam until she finds Jim. She must somehow be released, but it is unclear how, or from what, as the union was not in any way binding. Jim supports this same point when he finally arrives to their Canadian house: "Virginie, you needn't be 'fraid on me, kase I isn't hyar to mislest you. Chile, I kno's dat warnt no weddin', de law wouldn't 'low it nohow."[177] While Virginia has languished for years, maintaining her bourgeois virtue and refusing to marry Sam until receiving confirmation Jim will not claim that the sham marriage was legitimate, Jim himself showed no such caution. Jim reveals he has "no free distution ob mysel' at all, kase Ise got a truly wife, an' Ise got twins, a boy an' gal; one's nam'd Jinny an' de tother on Sam."[178]

Overall, the matches between Jim/Jinny and Basil/Clothilde are more about emulating bourgeois ideals of respectability and romance: the courtship scenes are almost belabored (if there at all), and it is hard to imagine how even a talented performer could coax heightened emotions out of the words. Sam has hidden his love from Jinny for years, and it is only with her marriage to Jim that he is moved into declaring his love – but amongst the group, not in an intimate exchange. When they meet again in DC, Basil refers to her as the "future Mrs. Knott" to

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175 Hopkins, *Peculiar Sam,* 7.
176 Ibid., 32.
177 Hopkins, *Peculiar Sam*, 35.
178 Ibid.

his colleagues, but the conversation in which they declare their love is tepid at best. Basil takes a stab at flattery, noticing that she "dressed differently" in Kentucky: "you wore a turban and linsey dress and coarse rough shoes. Now you are dressed better than your late Mistress, and you are handsomer than she ever was, the old reprobate."[179] In turn, Clothilde thanks him for his "loyalty and devotion to one who is proud of your friendship and appreciates its full value."[180] When they finally get around to talking love, Basil swears he "dedicates my life and all I possess to the brave woman whom in sunshine and in shadow was faithful and true to me, who regarded no risk too great no sacrifice to dangerous to compass the liberation of the man she secretly loved from an ignominious death."[181] When it is her turn to declare her feelings, Clothilde offers a bit more convincing words, saying that she loves him with "an intensity and passion that you can never fully know" and describes the time she carried a gun into battle and killed men about to dispatch him.[182] Finally embracing, they look forward to using the "sanction of the law to bind them together indissolubly."[183] Clearly, the Clothilde/Basil and Sam/Jinny romantic plots are not represented as the illogical and grandiose passions of war-torn lovers of differing loyalties (as in the white popular melodramas)– these are matches that are part of a narrative of racial uplift, expressing fidelity and joining together in a mutual project of progress. When their dialects change due to their assimilation and education into Northern European American models of speaking, when they are free, when they have achieved financial independence and security – then and only then can romance can be fulfilled.[184] A legitimate marriage is a means to an end, rather than the means itself.

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[179] Davis & Bruce, *Our Old Kentucky Home,* 38.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., 39.
[183] Ibid., 40.
[184] In *Peculiar Sam*'s final scene, everyone except the older couple (Mammy and Caesar) and Jim have dropped dialect, and Basil/Clothilde have dropped theirs as well after the war. Clothilde uses different accents during her scenes where she dons men's clothing and infiltrates Confederate camps to save Basil: Robson proposes that this not only conveys Clothilde's strength and ability to disguise herself, but that this drew on a particular talent of Davis, who played the role. In addition, Clothilde's recurring courage is commented upon by Basil once she has left the scene, leading Robson to conclude that the playwrights

The paucity of marriages given due respect on stage in African American sites of slave memories contrasts with the marriages regularly occurring offstage, and those that were sometimes incorporated into performances. Emma Hyers married a band leader within their company during a Callender's Minstrels performance, and an onstage marriage took place during at least one performance of *The Southerners*.[185] Social updates in the *Freeman*'s theatre pages suggest that performers regularly met and were wed as either part of the same troupe, or intra-troupe: with the regularity of vaudeville and specialty acts being incorporated into shows, intra-troupe marriages were possible. There were many powerful performing couples as well: Will Marion Cook and Abie Mitchell, Billy and Cordelia McClain, George and Aida Overton Walker, among others. In parlors, in hotel lobbies, in local churches, and very often along touring routes, black performers participated in a legal ceremony that decades ago would have been denied to the vast majority of African Americans.

Thus, it seems that black marriages presented in the context of minstrel performances or jubilant musical numbers – but not as central plot devices – were hardly irregular features and caused no real stir. But in the produced texts that featured memories of slavery, the only two romantic matches that were featured in the plot were ancillary to the emancipationist narrative: and both of these romances were seen by relatively small audiences nationally. The resolution of Jim and Jinny's romantic plot was not always played in the three-act version of *Peculiar Sam* that appeared in Boston. Considering Davis's and Bruce's show only played in a handful of Northeastern cities for one season in 1898 and was later revived for one showing in Denver in 1903, the projection of such black bourgeois-model romances on the popular stage had limited consumption at best.[186]

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would have wanted to have a black man praise a black woman "to respond to the significantly patriarchal culture of the nineteenth-century African-American community." Robson, "More Aggressive," 131.

[185] See Errol Hill, "The Hyers Sisters: Pioneers in Black Musical Comedy," in *The American Stage: Social and Economic Issues from the Colonial Period to the Present,* eds. Tice L. Miller and Ron Engle (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 117; "Negroes Married on Stage," *New York Times,* June 17, 1904, 9.

[186] Robson, "A More Aggressive Plantation Play," 123.

The women drawn by Hopkins and Davis and Bruce stood in direct conflict with some of the more conservative elements of the black community, but acted much like some of the white heroines of popular stage melodramas minus the wild declaration of intersectional devotion– saving men through physical acts, and, in the case of Juno and Clothilde, using guns to protect men. Juno is not given any sort of romantic attachments, and while Clothilde's is more closely aligned with the romances of popular stage melodramas in the 1890s, emancipation still trumps romance. The inclusion of strong heroines like Juno and Clothilde – both devised by progressive women writers – does hint at the gendered fractures within the post-war black community. The more dominant debate between the Booker T. Washington "bucket" model of gradual rights requisition and W.E.B. Du Bois's brand of immediate and full equality tends to obscure debates about gender. Most models of progress offered by black writers and activists tended to mark advancement by rights afforded to men; the juridical and political rights that white men enjoyed were the goals agitated for, and women's rights were (in keeping with larger cultural currents) subsidiary. Instead "female respectability and domesticity" were considered markers of "freedom's success," and "male accomplishment" was the only barometer of political progress.[187]

So what space is created for the future of the race, when compared to the white, procreative, intersectional space of European American melodramas? It seems that the future is rooted in community; rather than one couple symbolizing national restoration, as in many GAR plays and popular melodramas, a post-war communal space is created. In this space, performers move within their community fluidly, forming legal marriages, creating training grounds, and finding opportunities for performance that will provide financial gain and future employment openings. On stage, whether the romantic interactions are the flirtations between black extras depicted in the plantation fields of *Black America* or located in the bourgeois union between Basil and Clothilde, there is the same closing: a chorus of voices, reclaiming history and performance conventions as their own. It was not until 1921, when *Shuffle Along* appeared, that

[187] Clark, *Defining Moments*, 91.

a black romance – including a love ballad– proved a financial success. Instead the dominance of a communal black identity and future becomes a sort of utopian alternative, and whiteness becomes doubly peripheral and removed from sites of memories.

Peripheral Whiteness & the War

Because of the segregationist practices inherent in the US public sphere before and during the Jim Crow era, there is little surprise that there are so few instances of black and white performers sharing speaking roles on the popular stage. If, as in *Our Old Kentucky Home*, the masters are removed – and the white performers are likewise removed because of prejudicial stage tactics – then where are the white folk in these sites of memories? When African Americans performed war memories, how was whiteness and all the cultural and legislative measures that shored it up critiqued? How does the war's meaning change and shift from a "white man's war" to the promise of emancipation, particularly when emancipation did not produce the anticipated and much-desired equality? How does whiteness "appear" when it does not appear at all?

Because, as mentioned above, black rights were often charted by the gains of black men specifically, seeing how black masculinity was portrayed – especially in the rare moments when it was held up against white masculinity – will reveal an ongoing critique of white patriarchy. This is a limited critique of patriarchy, however: the hegemonic power of white patriarchy as a whole is questioned and at times even mocked, but the construction of patriarchy itself is left intact. First-wave feminism's aims were not embraced by the country and its legislative body; little wonder, then, that the assertion of black masculinity – especially in light of black soldiers' service in the Civil War – is legible in these sites of memories.

In the male-dominated war zones represented in the GAR dramas and in commercial plays set during the war, African American characters were almost always denied access and/or capability with a weapon. In *Black America*, however, soldiers from the Spanish American war

who served in the 9th US Cavalry wore impressive uniforms –"show[ing] off their fine figures and brass buttons without regard to the feelings of the dusky damsels whose shattered hearts may be left in their train" – and would drill with their weaponry.[188] Testaments to the masculinity and prowess of black soldiers such as this would undoubtedly have not played well in the South, but in the transplanted cotton fields of Brooklyn and its later showing in Boston, the drills and "fine figures" with "brass buttons" were part of what Webb reads as a statement on "links between Negro identity, patriotism, and American citizenship."[189] Basil becomes a talented soldier in *Our Old Kentucky Home*, even if he still requires Clothilde's involvement at crucial moments to free him or shoot down enemies; however, because Clothilde does this all out of love and devotion to *him*, her use of intrigue and weaponry does not infringe upon Basil's masculinity. In this, Clothilde functions like other "leddies" of paler skin tones who have taken up weapons or donned breeches in defense of their sweethearts – flirting with masculinity, but never fully dismantling it as they ultimately return to feminine, subservient roles. Sam of *Peculiar Sam* overpowers and turns a gun on the overseer tracking the fugitive slaves, but is not called upon to use it at any point. These assertions of black masculinity via militaristic accomplishment in popular performance were not defining features of these plays.

However, the question of masters – where they are, who plays them, and what happens to them when the war comes – is much more compelling. Whiteness is peripheral: inhabiting the audience spaces beyond the edges of the stage, but ultimately occupying the fringes of these historical representations as well. Masters and white people, it is implied by these sites, are unable to "protect" their property (in contrast to the pro-slavery arguments that white could offer slaves protection) or deliver on the promises of the Civil Rights amendments. The way that masters are explained away or gaps in white presence appear suggests that African American performances of slavery and emancipation were interrogating white hegemonic claims to power. Toll points out that there was a tradition in black minstrel songs that masters were written out

[188] "Fun for the Darkies," *New York Times*.
[189] Webb, "Authentic Possibilities," 78.

of the lyrics (in contrast to the minstrel songs of Steven Foster and others), and it is not for nothing that spirituals – the coded songs of escape and freedom – were often incorporated into plantation spectacles, black musical comedies, and melodramas alike. The double-consciousness that Krasner found in early black musicals and the moments of identity construction that Webb found in plantation spectacles are both embedded in these productions: black communities are circumscribed and articulated, against and beyond whiteness, while the failed policies of Reconstruction and the aftereffects of the lost second civil war are critiqued.

In the productions performed by the Hyers Sisters troupe, whiteness itself is undesirable. *Out of Bondage*'s Uncle Eph comparing whiteness itself to evil: Adam was black, and that God chose "some ob de culled people, an' he whitewashed 'em as a terrible example to evil-doers."[190] The younger Kaloolah responds that she would not entirely mind such a punishment: and, indeed, at the close of the play, Kaloolah and the younger generations have achieve a sort of racial balance – they are paid for the spirituals they learned in the plantation cabin, but it is predominantly white audiences (though they allow mixed race seating) that pay for their singing and for the bourgeois house and clothes they now possess. When they await the arrival of the Yankee soldiers, Uncle Eph is not misled like some of his GAR play brethren: he sees the Union soldiers as heroic saviors – each "ten foot high" - rather than men who will potentially turn cannibal.[191] Eph promises Aunt Naomi that these soldiers will "drive de white folks off de face ob de earth; and den dey's gwin to gib de cullud people de land an' de pervisions."[192] He holds no delusions about the efficacy of the Union plan, and predicts one of the failures of Reconstruction; when Aunt Naomi cheers for the Yankees, Uncle Eph tells her to "shut yer mouf" because they could not possibly work the promised forty actors in their old age. "Ole massa's always been good to us," he explains to her, suggesting they "stick to him just as long as

[190] Bradford, *Out of Bondage*, 16.
[191] Ibid., 24.
[192] Ibid.

he gibs us dis and victuals."[193] Kaloolah envisions a topsy-turvy world after emancipation, where she inhabits the "big house" and white people act as her servants. It will not be her own masters who wait upon her, however – the owners fled to safety with friends, giving no notice, and telling the slaves they left behind via Narcissa to do as the slaves see fit as "they no longer claimed any authority" over their property.[194] The young are to follow the Union army; the old and "feeble" will stay on the plantation "till times changed."[195] In a spectacular *deus ex machina*, the stage directions describe a gun boat traversing the stage, "full of soldiers and colored refugees," as the young board and Uncle Eph and Aunt Naomi remain behind.[196] Whiteness as written by a white man and enacted by a black troupe in this instance is ambiguous: for the young, pliable, and able, white soldiers can transport them to the North, a veritable Canaan and land of opportunity. Eph and Naomi must linger within a broken world with little or no support. Five years later, when Eph and Naomi finally find their way to the promised land to visit the now-grown children in Boston, they reveal what befell them in the intervening years: the elder couple joined General Sherman on his march and while aunt Naomi revels in freedom, Uncle Eph complains that he works "jes as hard as eber" and declares "freedom's a fraud."[197] The white soldiers did indeed create a "red sea of their blood" so that they could buy the "way to freedom" for the slaves according to Narcisse, but Eph and Naomi's journeys and his retort suggests that freedom was not all he anticipated.[198] In Eph's complaint there could be read stereotypical interpretation of black as "lazy," a regular aspect of some minstrel show characters – but Eph's concerns are real. It would have been known to audiences in 1876 (and especially in later revivals) that forty acres and a mule did not lead to Kaloolah's topsy-turvy utopian world, and the lack of delivery instead led to countless blacks locked in post-war systems like share-cropping that in many ways perpetuated the same inequalities as slavery. Instead, Eph and

[193] Ibid., 25.
[194] Ibid., 31.
[195] Ibid., 32.
[196] Ibid., 39.
[197] Ibid., 49.
[198] Ibid.

Naomi aimlessly tag along with Sherman, hoping to presumably live off scraps as the Union army burned and destroyed some of the very land they claimed they would give back to ex-slaves. As mentioned above, the rose that Narcisse planted is one of the few things that will grown on the old plantation – it is a ruin, and those that remained behind cannot gain value from it unlike their freed counterparts in *Our Old Kentucky Home*. Thus, the promise of emancipation provided by the liberating Union army is circumscribed – there is no real attempt to support the Uncle Ephs and Aunt Naomis, too old to work the land alone, but unwilling to leave home. The "fraud" that Uncle Eph aligns with emancipation is not necessarily a statement that he wishes to return to slavery, but it is a realistic testament to the legal abandonment and failed governance of Reconstruction in the South.

Pauline Hopkins did not have any white performers in the Hyers Sisters troupe or her own, though the slave-master still is still present in spirit. The masters are absent here in that they do not appear onstage, but Jim works for them and acts as an extension of slave-owning power – it is little wonder that he takes on the white costume of a ghost to try and trick Sam, and Sam, when playing master, takes on a whip and a disguise as an overseer to cover their escape. Instead, the only mentions of the master would have been the sham marriage between Jinny and Jim and his confusion over Juno's decimation of his matrimonial headboard. Martha Patterson reads the incident where Juno shoots the gun into the bed for practice earlier as "disempower[ing]" the masters, both mocking them and in this shooting symbolizing the "domestic and sexual turbulence caused in the master's household by slavery"; whether read as an attack on white procreative abilities, the sacrilege of a marital institution that so many white masters participated in, or perhaps even rage against her own sexual abuse (though this is not mentioned in the script at all, it is hardly an unfair assumption), Juno's assault drives home the many damning aspects of the slave trade.[199] The master generally is incapable in this play –

[199] Martha Patterson, "Remaking the Minstrel: Pauline Hopkins's *Peculiar Sam* and the Post-Reconstruction Black Subject," in *Black Women Playwrights: Visions on the American Stage*, ed. Carol P. Marsh-Lockett (New York: Garland, 1999), 16.

blessing forced marriages, completely unaware that one of his female slaves regularly takes practice potshots into his own bedroom furniture or that Sam stole his money, and then fleeing when the war comes. "Arter that ol' Lincolm sent his sogers down dar," Jim reveals when they are all in Canada, "Marse he runned 'way an' seeing he didn't stop for his valuables, I propriated 'em to my private uses."[200] Again, this outcome of the Union invasion was not seen by many audiences who saw *Slaves' Escape* rather than the more limited appearances of *Peculiar Sam*. Hopkins's play might not boast a mouthpiece for criticizing Reconstruction like Bradford's Uncle Eph, any lingering pro-slavery/Lost Cause argument that masters were "good" and both civilized and protected their slaves is clearly undermined.

While *Black America*'s plantation lacked a master, the white characters presiding were in portrait tableaux with Frederick Douglass – John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and General Sherman (even with the last's ambiguous stance on race) were brought out during the final chorus. That these particular white men were presented and placed on an equal footing with Douglass presents a differing portrayal of whiteness: these are the *best* of the white men, those who heroically facilitated emancipation. If white masters and overseers are the only characters missing that would have made *Black America* authentic, the appearance of these whites men, held up mirror-like to the audience, was a reminder of the great burden they had to bear (very different from the white man's burden that those of Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s caliber would identify). The project of emancipation that was pursued by these great men remains unfinished, these portraits suggests: and while held up during rousing patriotic songs, perhaps some of the predominantly white audience members in Brooklyn and Boston would take note, while others would stroll happily through the transplanted cotton fields after the show, oblivious to this possible interpretation.

There is a competing phenomena where African American performers played white characters: though the Hyers Sisters were trailblazers in many regards, the appearance of truly

[200] Hopkins, *Peculiar Sam*, 35.

mixed racial casting in speaking roles was a rather unique experience for the late nineteenth century. Instead, in both Sager's pageant *The Negro* and Davis's and Bruce's *Our Old Kentucky Home*, white characters appear and, according to the available evidence, were played by African American performers.[201] The whites in *Our Old Kentucky Home* have already somewhat been touched upon, but – as a race – they are poorly represented: the leering men at the auction, the traitorous Knott Senior, his spite-filled wife, and his rapist son are the central figures. Though the white general and Ms. Lamar prove loyal to the North (or, in her case, more disloyal to the Knotts) and are married; as attendees to the wedding of Basil and Clothilde, they serve as endorsing figures to their wedding but are not present for the reclamation of the plantation. Robson reads the use of whiteface as a way for Davis and Bruce to "control…the system of definition…with the white characters in the play reduced to stereotypes."[202] By engaging in the same brand of racial play and stereotypes that white minstrel performers had been drawing upon for decades, Sager and Davis's productions moreover turned minstrelsy itself on its head – and, in doing so, African Americans become the heroes of the Civil War rather than the white portraits erected in *Black America*. This was not just reclaiming a definition of race; this was, by extension, portraying a history in which African Americans were resoundingly at its center, the driving force against white impediments to emancipation.

Even with the inclusion of white stand-ins – portraits, characters, etc. – the Civil War is not depicted as a "white man's war" in sites of memories featuring African American performers where evidence of plot and narrative structure survives. Contrary to Douglass's earlier sentiments, the war is articulated via the black experience, and slavery is foregrounded as its cause. The peripheral whiteness in these sites of memories generated by African Americans

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[201] Robson believes that the use of whiteface makeup is most probably for Davis's troupe – especially as a cast list establishes the same actor in both black and white roles in the Denver 1903 appearances. As for *The Negro,* several newspaper accounts mention the local African American residents that participated and even list a black man playing white and black roles, but there is never any mention of white performers. Whether the actors used actual whiteface make-up or not in either play is conjecture, but seems likely. Harry Fidler impersonated "President McKinley, Benj. Harrison, Geo. L. Knox and Admiral Dewey" in Indianapolis, if not the other venues as well. See "The Stage," *Freeman*, June 9, 1900, 5.
[202] Robson, "More Aggressive," 135.

logistically demands a shift in focus: the black experience, the shared trauma and triumph of slavery and its eventual emancipation are central, even as the rights gained by the war were slowly but surely stripped away. The utopian sense of black community is, however, perpetually in these productions subjected to the white gaze of segregated (or white only) audiences.

Disjuncture

Historians have chronicled the speeches, the conventions, the Emancipation Day celebrations, the monuments, the artwork, the countless other products and projects that went into the struggle to define and maintain African American cultural memory. But popular performance, as generated by African American performers for predominantly white audiences –with black audiences in mind as well – vastly differs from how these historians define the civil rights discourse and emancipationist products of the period. Though David Krasner and Barbara Webb, among others, have seen the recuperative gestures embedded in these productions, it is hard to deny that the sites of memories mentioned above are harder to mine for overt narratives of race progress.

Within the context of the post-war landscape and the early twentieth-century, however, the theatre provided more lucrative job opportunities than many African Americans still working in Southern fields could have possibly imagined. The alternative spaces of progress and racial identity were not always presented dramaturgically per se – it was in the act of performance itself that many of these spaces were made and celebrated, ephemeral as they were. If white audiences wanted song and dance numbers from authentic "Southern negroes," black performers would harness this need and adapt black forms to present in professional acts. A pickanniny chorus, a buck-and-wing dancing contest, a quartette, a rendition of a minstrel or original song, a cake-walk, another plantation cabin: these spaces were uniquely African American, even considering the emotional and complicated Lott-like racial borrowing that would occur. Blacks in the audience saw blacks on stage performing dances, songs, and routines

that were their own. Through relegated to the gallery, black audience members – if present – could see the European American eyes that were trained on the black majority overwhelming the stage. The oft-mentioned lyrics by Will Marion Cook of "Swing Along," that the black singers sing to drown out the white chorus within the opening scene of *Southerners* say, ""White fo'ks a-watchin' an' seein' what you do / White fo'ks jealous when you'se walkin' two by two." Now, rather than the forced performances of slavery, the white folks were watching the black folks perform slavery as laborers who got to keep their own wages, and this watching would continue to accrue value for as long as the show ran. By establishing alternate spaces for professionalization and racial identity, African American performers used the plantation trope – the preferred representational setting for white dominated audiences – for fiscal and professional gain: profiting from sites of memories that, when contextualized in a geographical and historical reality, did nothing but exploit ancestral black bodies.

By contrast, this need for an audience to endorse and further the black performers and perhaps the emancipationist cause likewise shows the limitation of political power inherent in these sites of memories. If citizenship is constructed by the hegemonic technologies of law, blacks for the hundred years after the Civil War were marked, as Falguni Sheth theorized, as "unruly" and pushed beyond the bounds of equal citizenship. Whether these popular performances served to mark black bodies as "unruly" or not, black performers had in some part reclaimed the depictions of African American characters – white audiences increasingly demanded the authenticity that only black performing bodies could provide, not the "black-faced white trash" of blackface minstrelsy. The communal and professional spaces that black performers carved out within plantation sites of memories were always circumscribed within the juridical and social limitations and hegemonic doings of white supremacy. The political efficacy of these performances comes with a caveat: the adoption of the emancipationist cause – the wholesale embrace by the white dominant population of the war's entire point and purpose as the elimination of slavery – was never going to be a viable outcome for African American

performances of plantation memories. The second civil war quite lost, African American performers were forced into the Booker T. Washingtonian route: advancement via professionalization, with all its limitations, imagining and performing alternative spaces of promise and community via shared historical memories when possible.

Chapter 4

Post-war Southern Spaces:

Nostalgia, the Lost Cause, and the White Supremacist Vision

William Haworth's *On the Mississippi* had been touring for nearly a year by the time the production reached Baltimore in September 1895. Haworth had already made a name for himself with the non-sectional war drama *The Ensign* (1892).[1] One Boston reviewer used hyperbole to describe Haworth's popular reception: "William Haworth is a greater playwright than that other William named Shakespeare, judging from the gallery boys' standpoint."[2] For this initial touring production of *On the Mississippi*, the playwright took on the role of the hero. Ned Raymond is a Northerner and Union veteran who comes to Tennessee in 1867 to invest in the state's coal mines. His fortune is soon squandered when he gets involved with a seductress, working at the behest of a New Orleans-based casino owner. As the scenes move up and down the Mississippi – from rural mountains to Mardi Gras New Orleans to showboat casinos to swamps and back again – the villains rely upon the Ku Klux Klan to pursue our heroic victim under various pretenses. Producer Thomas Davis foregrounded the "thrilling incidents and rapid action" and "the scenic equipment," drawing audiences in for several years on the touring circuit.[3]

After a premiere in Brooklyn at the Bijou Theatre in November 1894, the production moved to various theatres in Boston, Philadelphia, and around the Northeast – including down to West Virginia and with stops in between – before making its way to Baltimore. The company relied on supernumeraries hired around town to fill the extra roles, including the KKK. This practice apparently got Haworth into trouble in Baltimore, when a group of angry

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[1] Cf. above, chapter 2, 88.
[2] "At the Play," *Boston Journal*, March 17, 1896, 7.
[3] "The Passing Show," *Boston Journal*, October 4, 1894, 8.

supernumeraries stormed the backstage after the third act and attacked the (reportedly diminutive) stage manager in an attempt to find the whereabouts of the actor/playwright. One super was particularly bullying: it was unclear what suddenly enraged the man, as he must have been somewhat aware of his role's purview prior to the evening's production. The "gentleman" reportedly threatened to beat up Haworth, saying,

> I'm a Southern gentleman, by God, suh! Did you ever see a Southern gentleman before, sah? No; I thought not! And I was a member of the Ku Klux mayself, suh – they were all Southern gentleman – yes, suh! We never did such a damnable thing as this, suh – nevah! To put me in such a gang as this, suh – to be hissed by my own people suh…Damn your show![4]

Haworth took refuge in the box office until the insulted Southerner was removed from the theatre, then "came out…rubbing his hands gleefully" so the fourth act could go on: "'By George!' said he, 'we're making a great hit tonight!'"

Whether this incident actually occurred or was fabricated for publicity purposes, Haworth's supposedly gleeful but harrowing encounter with the angry ex-KKK supers begins to hint at the complicated nexus of race, class, gender, and historical re-visioning that is manifest in the sites of embodied theatrical memories falling within the white supremacist vision. This vision, which David Blight claims "locked arms with reconciliationism," had "delivered the country a segregated memory of its Civil War on Southern terms" by the dawn of the twentieth century.[5] The "Southern terms" of the white supremacist vision, as performed on the US stage, are the focus of this chapter.

The performed sites of memory set in the post-war South represent an important segment of the widespread cultural work being done that popularized white supremacist visions of the war.[6] By the powers of romanticizing, nostalgia, and melodramatic construction, the post-

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[4] "An Insulted Super," *New York Herald*, October 6, 1895, 4.
[5] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2.
[6] There were of course popular productions set in the South during the war. As mentioned in chapter two, the plays of William Gillette, Clyde Fitch's *Barbara Frietchie*, and others not included in this chapter (such as the *Warrens of Virginia* or *The Littlest Rebel*) were all set during the war. The one act of

war South grew to symbolize a utopian ideal of the American past. With the North's increasing factories and mechanized industrial complex, the utopian vision of a simpler, agrarian United States became a nostalgic space of innocence within ever-shifting war memories. Throughout the 1870s and into the early twentieth century, theatre producers and attendees used the South as a way of looking backwards, of idealizing a racial hierarchy and lost aristocracy that became increasingly identified as "America." The fact that this space of innocence was lost reveals, in turn, that America itself is an unstable mythology, constructed on the remnants of crumbling plantation walls and moonlit magnolia branches. The South is a subdued territory after the war, but a restored white nation that is mythical could never become whole and return to its simpler space.

In order to explore the ideological investments that are presented repeatedly in sites of white supremacist visions of war memories, I will first situate these productions within the context of the burgeoning Syndicate control of theatre and the cultural anxieties surrounding industrialization. After establishing this context, I will describe the depictions and genderings of the Lost Cause and the Southern landscape in the staged sites of memories to express the victimization of the South embedded therein. Often Northerners are the post-bellum invaders of the Southern landscape, looking to disrupt hierarchies or capitalize on the South's precarious condition. The "war of Northern Aggression" on stage continues well after the actual war has ended. The treatment of race, the Ku Klux Klan, and the ambiguous process of defining and cementing white fraternal bonds reveals the messy – and dangerously oppressive – nature of the performed and embodied sites of memories sharing ideology with the white supremacist visions of the war and its aftermath.

Monopolies and Hidden Modes of Production

Warrens set in the postwar South will be referenced in this chapter, but the other plays set solely in the South *during* the war will not.

Theatrical production and distribution mimicked trends in centralization that dominated business models of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The centralization of the theatre became more streamlined after the war, and by 1900 the number of traveling companies grew remarkably high, with New York as the point of origin.[7] When the Syndicate was formed in 1896 under the auspices of Marc Klaw and A.L. Erlanger, the group worked quickly to recruit artists, theatre managers, and agents, effectively muscling out the competition. The Syndicate, composed of three pre-existing partnerships, initially could only claim thirty-three houses in major urban hubs; by 1903 the business partners held seventy theatres.[8] The Syndicate controlled the majority of the houses in New York and Boston, and almost all the theatres in other urban areas nation-wide.[9] The Shubert brothers entered the scene in the early twentieth century and jockeyed for dominance, with the result that two monopolistic groups organized the majority of US staged entertainment until the slow death of road shows prior to World War I.[10]

Along with its conformity to the industrial practices of the day, theatre played a crucial role in leisure activities at this time. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, professional commercial theatre was the "nation's leading entertainment medium."[11] The control of the Syndicate meant that this incredibly popular medium mostly consisted of a curated set of productions that a consumer could view. Good business sense dictated that these products should cater to the widest possible national audience. In the case of Civil War-related

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[7] Poggi estimates that there were almost 100 touring groups in 1876, but a little over 400 by the early twentieth century –he marks this as the high point in the touring market. See Jack Poggi, *Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 6.

[8] A.L. Erlanger and Marc Klaw were already major names in New York theatres, while Charles Frohman and Al Hayman represented the Western touring circuits, and S.F. Nixon and J.F. Zimmerman dominated Philadelphia.

[9] These numbers, as worked out by Jack Poggi, do not include "one-night stands" that the producers booked separately. Jack Poggi, *Theatre in America*, 12-3. Alfred Bernheim asserts that even more than those 70 theatres fell under monopoly control, claiming that the organization also angled for booking rights at theatres not directly on its roster. See Alfred Bernheim, *The Business of the Theatre: An Economic History of the American Theatre, 1750-1932* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964, org. 1932), 51-2.

[10] See John Frick, "A Changing Theatre: New York and Beyond," in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume Two: 1870-1945*, eds. Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 210-22.

[11] Kim Marra, *Strange Duets: Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1916* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), xvii.

productions, this means that the plays were typically nonpartisan, with patriotism for country trumping wartime loyalties. As the stranglehold of syndicates and theatre monopolies grew, the agency of theatre spectators diminished. Audiences in the United States by the turn of the century were – for the most part – fixed into a relationship that favored the producer of theatrical material. Bruce McConachie believes that the power transferred from consumer to producer was settled by and large by 1900, when "national merchandisers were selling the best theatrical products to a national, homogenized audience."[12] Productions were sent out from New York by the ever-increasing power of the Syndicate, so that the "spectators' only remaining choice was whether or not to purchase the theatrical product."[13] The price of this product could also be dictated by this circuitry: even before the Syndicate, touring productions of shows originating in New York could demand a higher price than locally produced shows. An Atlanta critic reminded readers anticipating the arrival of *Alabama* in 1891 that "our people should not complain that the company charges New York prices, the same charged by them in St. Louis, New Orleans, Mobile, etc. It is by special favor we get 'Atlanta' before the large eastern cities."[14] With a hub of origin in New York, hits could be more easily manufactured under the watchful eye of the Syndicate and its agents. If it was successful in New York, it was sent to the rest of the country – sometimes with multiple traveling companies performing the same show – with the same anticipated results. Audiences in New York served as a control group (after the audience of the out-of-town tryout, should there be one), with an implicit assumption that no further audience tests would be required once a show was received well and profitably there. If a show was particularly successful, multiple touring companies appeared simultaneously, covering different regions to maximize profits.[15] The capitalist and monopolistic power of these economic

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[12] Bruce McConachie, "Pacifying American Theatrical Audiences, 1820-1900" in *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, ed. Richard Butsch (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 49.
[13] Ibid., 65.
[14] "Alabama," *Atlanta Constitution,* October 29, 1891, 11.
[15] This was the case with two plays mentioned in this chapter, *In Old Kentucky* (1893) and *The Clansman* (1905). Three companies of *In Old Kentucky* toured at one point, and the show was continuously

structures ensured that theatre artists, managers, and owners who fell outside the circuit of the two organizations had little other recourse. As part of the industrialization of culture, the phenomenon of nationally shared cultural products became more prevalent.

This does not mean that there were limited offerings in terms of variety: between vaudeville and variety acts, one-night stands, and longer runs of legitimate theatre pieces, there were many different entertainments for consumers. But these offerings were indeed set by the syndicates or touring management companies, creating a top-down structure of distribution rather than relying on the local theatrical company to provide the main theatrical entertainment (with occasional star appearances to supplement the offerings).

It is rather ironic that anxieties about the industrialization of culture and the economy are embedded in the content of productions set in the post-war South, for these very productions were only made possible and profitable by monopolistic distribution methods.[16] The potential of a parasitic or destructive force as a byproduct of industrialization was clearly on American minds: this anxiety appears repeatedly throughout these plays (and others) throughout the Gilded Age and Progressive Eras. Both in performance and in content, the produced sites of memory set in the post-war South hid the exploitation by management of workers in traveling shows and down-played the more nefarious effects of the industrialization of the United States to the audience consumers. [17]

In the cultural products related to Civil War memories surveyed in this chapter, industrialization remains an ambiguous entity that is ultimately overshadowed by the achievement of melodramatic romances. The economic stability of the South and the nation is

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performed for over two decades. See Constance Valis Hill, *Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21.

[16] In truth, it was the producers – and some lucky stars – who benefitted fiscally: the working conditions for the cast and crew were typically awful, and any attempts to rebel against the Syndicate or unionize often led to ostracism. See Frick, "A Changing Theatre," 218-20.

[17] Karl Marx suggests that commodities hide the social and labor relations that produce them. David Harvey claims that Marx's "concern is to show how the market system and the money-forms disguise real social relations through the exchange of things." See David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's* Capital (London: Verso, 2010), 41.

treated reassuringly in the melodramas explored here, but only after a typically Northern fiscal/industrial or political intervention. The North is both the potential aggressor and savior, establishing an uneasy relationship between rural/agrarian and mechanical/industrial powers. This relationship embodied the spirit of a reunited industrializing nation, but the settings and dramaturgy privileged the romance of the Old South. Herein lies the paradox at the very heart of these produced sites of memories falling within the white supremacist vision. There are repeated attempts to celebrate a quickly disappearing (if not already mostly disappeared) agrarian past associated with the Southern planter class. As industrial capitalism and the Civil War itself disrupted the utopian dream of the American past, cultural products responded accordingly: the Lost Cause, its paeans that honored masculine chivalry, and the conjuring of the "old Southern" ways of life became the popular vision of Civil War memories.

The effect on drama set in the post-war South is twofold: there is an increasing trend to romanticize the Lost Cause narrative onstage, and in turn to portray the South in drama as a victim. One particular scene serves to illuminate this point. William DeMille's *The Warrens of Virginia* was staged by David Belasco in 1907 and ran for over 300 performances in New York City at his theatre before going on a road tour. Several reviewers assured spectators that "it differs radically from those dramas which have been classed as war plays," and that even though it was mostly set "during the Civil War…it is in no sense a 'war play,'" as the genre had somewhat fallen out of vogue by this time.[18] Only the last act takes place after the war, and it opens with two Confederate veterans mending clothes that are five years old – the only set of clothes they have, it seems, since they stick each other with needles while trying to fix the clothes on their backs. Bill weeps as Zack sews, asking if he remembers when "Uncle Robert…rode off to Appomattox," the soldiers not knowing surrender was in store.[19] General Warren – the heroine's father – has been left as destitute as the common soldiers, while his faithful ex-slave complains

[18] "Another Belasco Success," *Daily Picayune*, November 21, 1907, 7; "'Warrens of Virginia,'" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 10, 1907, 14.
[19] William C. De Mille, *The Warrens of Virginia*, 1907. *Twentieth Century North American Drama* (Alexander Press, 2013), 68.

that "de general feedin' de whole country, when ain't got nuffin' himself" and that a man of his stature has to plow his own field.[20] Warren declares that even if "the moment has come when a Warren of Virginia must work in his own fields," they "will yet see the birth of a new Southern chivalry."[21] He reminisces fondly of Stonewall Jackson and the other Confederate dead. Their memories and pathetic garb reinforce the point that the losses suffered were not only material, but that an entire system of "chivalry" and its paragons were consigned to memory as well. [22] Much like William Gillette and Bronson Howard before him, William De Mille set the prior three acts in a Southern home during the war; but this post-war act reminds theatre (and, later, film) spectators that the old South was truly lost. The old South and the Lost Cause that memorialized it – in its romanticized cultural product form rather than as a political movement itself per se – became the perfect antidote to the changes in economic practice and the anxieties surrounding immigration, racial/gender hierarchies, and a variety of other turn-of-the-century apprehensions.

The Lost Cause: Political Resurrection versus Cultural Productions

The Lost Cause rendering of Civil War memories was set in motion almost immediately upon the war's end. During the war the Confederacy had established a repertoire of songs, dramas, and prints celebrating the patriotism of the CSA – it is little wonder then that the lore of the Confederacy would be adapted into an enduring mythology of Southern culture and states' rights prior to the turn of the century. The Lost Cause is inseparable from the white supremacist vision of the war. Gaines Foster claims that while Southerners "returned to a loyal place in the Union without slavery," many still "struggled to retain as much political power as possible and

[20] Ibid., 69.
[21] Ibid., 70.
[22] William was the brother of film-maker Cecil B. De Mille, who later adapted his brother's play-text into a film version. Cecil starred in the original production at the Belasco in 1907, appearing as Arthur Warren, the eldest son of the family.

enforce white supremacy."[23] They were not completely repentant: the belief that the Confederate cause was a righteous one persisted, even as states were readmitted into the Union via oaths of allegiance. In fact, Southerners also desired that the "honor and heroism of their cause" be appreciated by the North.[24] Increasingly it appeared that the creators and consumers of popular culture in the North were fully prepared to honor this Southern heroism, though perhaps on different terms than Lost Cause adherents like Jubal Early originally intended. While Foster claims that the Lost Cause was not "purely backward-looking or romantic movement," the nostalgia and romanticism of a disappearing Southern past were exactly what was capitalized upon in prints, literature, tourism, music, and stage plays.[25]

The immense industrialization of the postwar period created a brand of escapism that reverted back to "a pre-Civil War, exotic South…all but 'lost,'" which was "now the object of enormous nostalgia."[26] While Blight (among others) has noted that there were indeed detractors from the Lost Cause narrative, the fantasy of an exoticized, nostalgic South still held popular sway. The plantation South and Confederacy provided a mental conception of lost refuge, a "healing balm for the worried and disruptive society" into the early twentieth century.[27] There was a sudden willingness to romanticize and mourn the same class that was represented as extravagant and elitist in the earlier GAR plays. The shift in popular sentiment reveals the overwhelming preference on a widespread level for the Lost Cause version of the war – or at least the most romanticized parts – versus the Union narrative.

The plantation reminisces of writers like Thomas Nelson Page popularized the lost South in fiction. The memorial efforts in print, statues, parades, and other activities of various organizations – such as the United Confederate Veterans, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy – kept the Confederate cause visible. The prints and

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[23] Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 20.
[24] Ibid., 5.
[25] Ibid., 6.
[26] Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 211.
[27] Ibid., 276.

travel journals of Northern travelers seeking respite at Southern resorts were widely circulated. These cultural products along with minstrel shows and stage plays set in the postwar South contributed to and informed the tastes of Northern *and* Southern consumers. While there were obviously more strenuous efforts on the part of the UCV, SCV, and UDC to influence school curriculum, memorials, and events to preserve a white supremacist memory within the South itself, the overall circulation of romanticized Southern imagery was part of the national imagination of the 1890s onward. Indeed, according to Lloyd Hunter, the fervor of the Lost Cause practice can be looked upon as a religious code in the lives of white Southern men and women. Hunter argues that this civic religion of the postwar South was an "amalgam of Protestant evangelicalism and Southern romanticism," promising the eventual "resurrection" of the Confederacy.[28] It seems that Northern-generated images and manifestations of the Lost Cause – including those which originated as stage plays – downplayed the evangelicalism, but capitalized on the romanticism of the Southern cause. Or, in another turn: while the political institution of the Confederate States of America itself was never realized via resurrection, the enduring and pliable mythology of the Lost Cause has been repeatedly resuscitated and deployed in popular culture – often with great commercial success.

This divide between political reality and cultural products is crucial to an understanding of how the white supremacist vision was projected upon the US stage. These plays were not outright endorsements of slavery, nor did they argue through structure or content that the Confederacy should be re-born. Rather, the embodied sites of white supremacist memories linked melodrama and Southern romanticism, with the added bonus of protecting the white female body and reaffirming antebellum racial/ethnic hierarchies. The role of these white female bodies – on stage, in the audience, and as participants in memorialization movements – is part of the calculus of this divide between political demands and cultural offerings. Several

[28] Lloyd A. Hunter, "The Immortal Confederacy: Another Look at Lost Cause Religion," in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 186.

historians have established the centrality of women to the Lost Cause, not only as mourners but as advocates for memorials, publications, charity benefits, and education that promoted the Lost Cause.[29] This involvement empowered women in political and cultural memory construction in a sustained way, but theatrical productions did not subscribe to this aspect of the Lost Cause in Southern political and cultural practice. The difference here lies within melodrama: the need for a villain, a victim, and a hero demands pathos, which allows the South and its inhabitants to be depicted – again and again – as victims of Northern aggression.

Southern Victimization

To stage the South after the war was a more expansive way of staging Civil War memories themselves. The Civil War was fought primarily on Southern soil, and the destruction exacted on the Southern landscape by Sherman's and other campaigns was both a subject of bitterness and later depictions of victimhood.[30] By showing a reconstructing/ed South on stage, artists and performers were both creating a taste for and catering to a public yearning for moonlight, magnolias, and tales of Southern decay – and, by extension, a narrative that forgave and took pity on the South. This postbellum pity not only smacked of the mass pardons President Andrew Johnson issued to ex-Confederates, but the re-envisioning of Civil War memories that romanticized the South. In depicting the South as the ruined victim, the North was being recast as the aggressor – lending credence to the "War of Northern Aggression" version of events.

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[29] See Blight, *Race and Reunion*; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Cynthia Mills and Pamela Hemenway Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[30] The image of Southern feminine fortitude in the face of utter destruction was perhaps most famously depicted in the final scenes of Gone with the Wind. That scene – in both novel and film versions – drew upon a wealth of theatrical precedents, as still-proud but fiscally depleted Southern women draped in tatters heroically promised to forge on.

The resurrection of the Confederacy does not come to fruition in the romanticized sites of memory staged throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: at least, not in the sense of a re-establishing a separate nation built on a slave economy. Instead, the unions presented throughout these narratives depict the merging of the industrial North and agrarian/rural South. These unions occur within a framework of race relations that celebrates and maintains pre-war racial and class hierarchies, even if they are momentarily or at times tragically disrupted earlier in the plot. Poor or greedy whites are often depicted as villains, and while blacks are at times villainous (more often in the case of Thomas Dixons Jr.'s racial fantasias than anywhere else), it is the South that is the victim of this Northern aggression.[31]

A brief survey of several plays set in the post-bellum South displays how Northern involvement in Southern land, customs, business, and politics serves as the instigating dramatic action.[32] The fool of Steele MacKaye's *Fool's Errand* (1881) is a Radical Republican carpetbagger who relocates to the post-war Carolinas. Due to his acceptance of blacks and "nigger teacher[s]," he becomes a target of the Klan.[33] A debate over a Northerner constructing a railroad extending into Alabama and a local bayou – and possibly disrupting the frog population, upsetting the culinary tastes of local residents – opened Augustus Thomas's popular show *Alabama* (1890). Because a Northern syndicate wishes to purchase the coal on the hero's family land and demands an equal investment from the owner in Charles Dazey's *In Old Kentucky* (1893), a chain of events ensues to raise capital for the hero. When the Union veteran and US Army officer Henry Ford of Clay Green and Joseph Grismer's *The New South* (1893) comes to protect the election process in Reconstruction Tennessee, an angry and corrupt black character commits

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[31] Even if the character is not explicitly mentioned as being of a lower socioeconomic class, the fact that a man tries to achieve extra money very often implies lower ethical/moral character according to the rubric of melodrama.

[32] As with prior chapters, I am only interested in plays with definitive proof of production. Plays that were produced – especially ones that toured the nation widely, as is the case with most of the productions included here – are the ones that audiences consumed. These productions contributed to the overall construction of various visions of war memories, whether they were embraced or discarded.

[33] Steele MacKaye and Albion Tourgée, *A Fool's Errand*, ed. Dean H. Keller (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1969), 36.

murder and allows Ford to be fingered for the crime. *Down in Dixie* (1895) by Scott Marble features a Yankee brother-in-law, who convinces the transplanted wife of a Southern planter that her ex-husband is alive (he is actually very much dead), blackmailing her for money.[34] The Governor of Mississippi and titular character in Opie Read and Frank Pixley's *The Carpetbagger* (1899) is portrayed as a corrupt Northerner at the play's start. He accepts bribes to manipulate the courts and make criminals innocent, and takes money from a corporation – another railroad developer in the play – to finesse the legislature and get bills passed. Northern Radical Republicans are the erstwhile villains of Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s, *The Clansman*, with August Stoneman led astray by his (in the world of the play) dangerous beliefs in racial equality and an "evil" mulatto character. A nouveau-riche Northerner and his sister control the cotton mills, seeking to buy out the old bankrupt plantation nearby and thus secure the Southern daughter/mistress there in Freda Slemons's *The Sweetest Girl in Dixie* (1905). Thomas Dixon, Jr., joined with Channing Pollack to adapt Dixon's novel *The Traitor* (1908) into a stage-play. This time, the true villain was a Northern man from the "slums and prison pens of the North" who stabs a scalawag judge competing for the same Senate seat.[35]

This list is not exhaustive, but serves to point out how a large portion of plays set in the post-war South revolved in some way around Northern political/fiscal greed (the two are not mutually exclusive here), often exploiting the economic and technological under-development of the region. Nor are the villains of these plays always explicitly marked as "Northern" or "carpetbaggers": the pervasive industrializing power of the North, seeking to establish political and economic strongholds in the untouched Southern lands is more often than not the instigating action. While this pattern does not dictate the form or content in every production falling within the white supremacist vision, it is indeed noteworthy that Northern attempts for

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[34] There are two *Down in Dixie*s listed in the copyright deposit records for the Library of Congress, but proof of production only exists for the Marble play – it is this one that I will be referencing throughout.
[35] Thomas Dixon, Jr., and Channing Pollack, *The Traitor* (unpublished typescript). c. 1908. Performing Arts Research Collections, New York: New York Public Library, act I, 29. The manuscript begins new pagination with every act, so I will reference the act and page number. Because the play is co-authored by Dixon and he had little love for Reconstruction Republicans, the judge is far from being an angel either.

power and money are a recurring issue in these plays. Even Northerners who seemingly have the best of intentions – like Henry Ford or Stoneman – are, just like some of the Confederate brethren in the GAR dramas, misled and ill-advised, disrupting the established racial and power hierarchies of the South with at times tragic consequences.

Furthermore, the gendered suffering of the female characters contributes to the dramaturgical victimization of the South in these performed post-war sites of memories. With the protection and/or possession of the white female heroine as the ultimate objective of the melodramatic hero, the white female enables the hero or aids him in removing any obstacles. Even when women are depicted as strong and are capable of saving the hero or other male characters – when the heroine of *Down in Dixie* pulls an unconscious man from a crushing death in a cotton press, for instance, or when the mountaineering Madge of *In Old Kentucky* crosses an on-stage chasm by rope to dispose of a burning bomb before it can kill the knocked-out hero – the dramaturgical demands of melodrama must establish the final white patriarchal relations by its closure. They are not women who wish to resurrect the South, devoting their life to the maintenance of Confederate memory: these female characters wish merely to be saved by the melodramatic hero – and, in many cases, are willing to save a white man or two to get themselves saved. The heroines are often the victims of deception, leaving them in fiscal and/or virtuous calamity. The threat of financial or social ruin – at times in the form of the taint of black blood – looms over the female heroines. The fact that the impending ruin is often due to the South's social and economic dependence upon slavery and the war it instigated to try and defend the peculiar institution is conveniently overlooked. The sentimental hardships of displaced, innocent belles dramatize the victimization of the South, laying the pathos on with heavy hand. The heroine Babbie of *The Sweetest Girl in Dixie* frets over their poverty as she prepares for guests, despairing at her "threadbare" dress, the hole in the tablecloth, and that all

she has to feed her rich visiting cousin is chicken.[36] Agatha, the daughter and heroine in the *The Warrens of Virginia,* is horrified when her father invites an old Northern friend over for dinner, because they only have "hoecake and fry."[37] Her father persists, and she muses to herself in the garden as she looks upon the plentiful flowers, "I reckon we'll all have roses for dinnah."[38] Though she was raised by a proud Southern gentleman, the heroine of *Alabama* is a "little, unsophisticated Alabama girl, raised on a bankrupt plantation."[39] The names are even pregnant with Southern misfortune in *Alabama:* the secondary heroine, Atlanta, was named such because "she was born on the day that the city of Atlanta suffered the disaster of an entrance by your General Sherman…I called her 'Atlanta' in commemoration of that sad event."[40] When another lady hears that her adoptive father Colonel Clayton is murdered (by a miser who then seeks to force his ward into marriage), *On the Suwanee River*'s (1899) heroine Dora Clayton is left a destitute orphan and "becomes blind" from the "shock."[41] Dora is not the only one to endure the loss of vision: the later *Child of the South* (1913) has an orphaned heroine as well, and Rhoanoke also undergoes trauma-induced blindness when her uncle is murdered. Worse yet, the villain beats her brother with a brick after stealing the uncle's will, making Rhoanoke's brother a "half wit" and leaving the children impoverished.[42] Madge – the almost illiterate orphaned heroine of *In Old Kentucky* – is unaware of her economic disadvantages, proudly donning a "new" dress that is about fifty years behind the current fashions. A woman who lost her love in the war bestows a sash she wore at their last meeting on Lelia, the female lead in Lottie Blair Parker's *Under Southern Skies* (1901). With this sash in tow, Lelia goes through a series of trials. First, she is almost blackmailed into marriage by the villain, who leads her to believe her mother is

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[36] Freda Slemons, *The Sweetest Girl in Dixie* (unpublished typescript). c. 1906. Copyright Deposits, 1900-1944, Library of Congress, 7.
[37] DeMille, *Warrens*, 71.
[38]Ibid., 73.
[39] Augustus Thomas, *Alabama*, 1898. *Literature Online* (Cambridge: ProQuest Information and Learning, 2003), 23.
[40] Ibid., 52.
[41] "At the Theatres. 'On the Suwanee River,'" *Trenton Times*, January 30, 1905, 2.
[42] "Child of the South at Grand Today," *Duluth News-Tribune*, February 2, 1913, 13.

mixed race. Lelia tries to return the sash to its owner while agonizing over her possible racial identity and having to discard the man she loves to save her family: the sash – a remnant of a lost Confederate soldier – becomes symbolic of the inherent suffering that Southern women endured. Her dying mother has already reappeared on the scene in disguise, since the family has believed her dead for years. The matriarch interjects during the wedding, revealing that the family's secret shame originated not from a "taint of negro blood," but instead from her abandonment of her husband for another man.[43] The mother's disgrace is forgiven, and Leila is reunited with her lover. The sin of a parent's adultery could be absolved, especially when the blame falls upon a member of the "weaker sex," but Leila would have been forever unmarriageable due to the forced rape of a slave woman decades prior.

Of course, absent parents and suffering heroines are not new to melodrama. In these instances, however, the war is implicated as the cause of this gendered misery. The recurring pathos in these productions can be explicitly tied to loss – material and otherwise – somehow inflicted by the Civil War. The economic annihilation of the South by the North is exploited for maximum sympathy, appealing to a theatre audience that was often explicitly gendered as feminine. This gendering of audiences was part of the process of "domestication, de-masculinization, and feminization" of the theatre Richard Butsch places alongside the "loss of audience autonomy."[44] The victimization of the South exposes complicated layers of gendering.

Whether at the hands of Northern aggressors, or just as victims left destitute from the war or exploitation, the melodramatic structures imposed in these produced sites of memories inextricably fixed Dixie and its denizens in the melodramatic form. The Southern land served as an important backdrop in this white supremacist vision and lent itself to the victimization that melodrama demands. The appeal of the South as a dramatic setting and as part of the nation's

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[43] Lottie Blair Parker, *Way Down South*, (unpublished typescript), 1901. Copyright Deposits, 1900-1944, Library of Congress, 116. When it appeared in London prior to the US, it was called *Way Down South* but this later became a sub-title to *Under Southern Skies* and that became the main title. See "At the Theatre, 'Under Southern Skies,'" *State*, August 18, 1908, 5.

[44] Richard Butsch, "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences," *American Quarterly* 46.3 (1994): 378, 395.

imagined agrarian/rural past all were central to the performance of these postwar sites of embodied war memories.

Southern Spaces

European melodramas, like those written and popularized by Kotzebue and Pixérécourt, had featured sensational and romanticized settings: these spectacles were far from novel on the turn-of-the-century US stage. But the Southern scenery featured in post-war dramas served a rather poignant function for post-war US spectators, differentiating these melodramas from other spectacular ancestors. With the end of slavery and the perceived onset of industrialization, the imagined South could stand in for a rapidly vanishing American ideal. The frontier was declared closed by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893, and the New South featured its advances in technological innovation at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition. The imagined topography of unspoiled mountains and farmed fields worked by (black, enslaved) hands rather than machines was rapidly disappearing, if not already mostly gone by the early twentieth century. Audiences both North and South relished fetishistic depictions of these increasingly threatened settings. Even though the majority of these plays were set in the decade or two following the war and not that far removed from late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century spectators, idyllic depictions of Dixie were increasingly seen as fictional rather than authentic. Thus, there is a proliferation of magnolia trees, rural mountains, moonshine stills, cotton presses, horse race-tracks, humid swamps, dilapidated plantation houses, rustic cabins, Klan hide-outs, steam boat casinos – the spectacle of exoticized settings was commercially successful with Gilded Age and Progressive Era audiences.

The reference to Southern settings as a fetish above is intentionally Marxist. In post-war dramatic settings, the "sensuous" nature of commodities – in this case, the commercial melodramatic sites of memories – takes on a fuller meaning. Marx, in David Harvey's reading, points out that this fetishism is how the "market system and the money-forms disguise real

social relations through the exchange of things."[45] The fetishism of these elaborate Southern settings hid the actual production of theatrical environments (typically by workers and artists underpaid and exploited by the monopolistic system) and the processes of industrialization writ large. The ideology conveyed in the rural and plantation settings also had a fetishistic value, though more in a literary sense than a purely Marxist one. As established above, rural Southern settings – seen as quickly vanishing, if not already extinct – served a palliative function towards the close of the nineteenth century. When one reviewer in Washington said that Augustus Thomas's *Alabama* was full of "atmosphere and sentiment," he very well could have been referring to all the produced sites of memories falling within the scope of the white supremacist vision.[46] Newspapers repeatedly made note of the scenery used, particularly in high-budget commercial productions. In fact, scenic designers themselves are noted and sometimes named: the "famous cotton compress scene" from *Down in Dixie* and the various other sets created by John H. Young for the production "takes the spectator in fancy away from his everyday surroundings, into the fair land of the magnolia and the cotton-bloom, the alligator and the pickaninny."[47] The producer and designers of *On the Mississippi* were likewise lauded for their work in reviews, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Before it came to New Orleans, the theatrical gossip columnist there looked forward to the "picturesque features of southern life" that the writer claimed were new to the stage, and noted that the scenery was based on "sketches and photographs of actual localities along the southern Mississippi" that Haworth gathered while doing research for the show.[48] A rapturous South Carolina critic declared that the first touring production of *In Old Kentucky* was "geographically told," and he used lyrical

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[45] Harvey, *Companion*, 41.
[46] "Local Amusements," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1901, 29.
[47] "At the Theatre. Famous Southern Play, "Down in Dixie," To-Morrow Night," *Knoxville Journal*, August 25, 1895, 5. The compress scene was considered highly sensational and merited mention in almost every review I have encountered. As machines encroach upon the plantation and cabin settings presented earlier in this climactic moment, an honorable male character is attacked by the two villains and thrown, unconscious, into the cotton press. The heroine Georgia, detained by the villains in the press's office, breaks through the door and pulls the victim from the press just before it can crush him. As if this isn't dramatic enough, stage directions also call for a fire to ignite at this time.
[48] "Green Room Gossip of Plays and the Players," *Daily Picayune*, May 13, 1894, 12.

poetics to describe the opening set (and every scene thereafter, with little on the acting or other attributes).[49] The critic wrote:

> The first act discloses a view in the Kentucky mountains. In the background peak after peak rises in lonely sublimity, huge and gray, weather beaten and seared, the sentinels of nature. Here and there thick-set pines clothe them with verdurous beauty, but on their summits rests the benediction of the snow as stainless in its purity as when it first fell from heaven. Far in the distance a waterfall waving like a silver veil plunges downward into a narrow, precipitous gorge.[50]

While descriptors to this degree are rare in other reviews, it is clear that the sets used by large, spectacle-driven commercial productions were made to both inspire awe and convey the "atmosphere" (as the reviewers were so fond of saying) of the South itself. Likewise, Lottie Blair Parker's *Under Southern Skies* had an "underlying vein of truth and reality" because some of her "closest friends have been Southerners."[51] A South Carolina critic was impressed how the "whole atmosphere of the magnolia-scented South" translated into Parker's production.[52] The initial touring production traveled with its scenery – "works of art in the stage carpenter line"[53] - which provided one setting for a Halloween scene with "frollicksome fun, common on that day the other side of the Mason and Dixon line."[54] Again endorsing the power of escapism, a reviewer said that "nothing less complicated and world-full has been presented in a theatre since the time of 'Alabama,'" referencing the atmospheric diversions of the play rather than theatre technology.[55] This "less complicated" depiction of Southern life gets to the crux of the space of innocence that might be regained in Dixie. Even though almost all these productions are set in

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[49] It seems that the set for the touring production was most likely only "realistic painting of Kentucky landscapes," as Felicia Londré describes productions appearing in Kansas City on a nearly annual basis. Presumably the touring companies did not use anything beyond painted flats/drops while on the road. See Felicia Londré, *The Enchanted Years of the Stage: Kansas City at the Crossroads of American Theater, 1870-1930* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 206.
[50] "'In Old Kentucky.' The Great Scenic Production at the Theatre Saturday Evening," *State*, December 3, 1894, 8.
[51] "At the Theatre. 'Under Southern Skies,'" *State*, August 18, 1908, 5. Parker was also the author of *Way Down East*, later adapted into a film by D.W. Griffith.
[52] "A Treat This Evening. 'Under Southern Skies' to be Presented at Columbia Theatre," *State*, August 25, 1908, 8.
[53] "Under Southern Skies Presented," *Evening Times*, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, January 27, 1903, 8.
[54] "This Week's Play Bills," *Washington Post*, February 15, 1903, 37.
[55] Ibid.

the past, they are often trying to achieve a space that the producers, playwrights, and designers posit was possible only a decade ago. Sometimes the lives lived within those settings were wildly complicated (heroines struck blind, elaborate bribe/blackmail plots, confused relationships and bloodlines, etc.), but the setting itself provided a level of romanticized simplicity, in touch with the rhythms and movements of a natural world that the machines of industrialization concealed.

Even when productions did not have the means of shows like *Down in Dixie*, *On the Mississippi*, *In Old Kentucky*, or *Alabama*, an idealized Southern space could be evoked through character. Much was made in newspapers of Freda Slemons's familiarity with the South (having been born and raised there, the daughter of a reconstructed senator who had fought for the Confederates) in response to her play *The Sweetest Girl in Dixie*: her ability to interweave "the spirit of the new South, the South in the days immediately following the Reconstruction period" created an "atmosphere of its own."[56] Part of her ability to recreate this "atmosphere" was said to be that she based the mammy character on her own nurse, "still alive on the old place in Arkansas."[57] While *Sweetest Girl* did not boast the large and expensive sets of earlier productions, these smaller ventures had other ways of inspiring atmosphere.

Melodrama and its space of innocence is thus pursued through both the content (reinforcing constructed hierarchies privileging whiteness) and the settings of these plays, evoking an always-already lost space in the imaginary of the American past. The onward march of nature that serves to romanticize and remind the audience of death is at times addressed directly by characters in these postwar Southern sites. The ex-Confederate general and father of the heroine in *At Piney Ridge* recalls how he came home after fighting to find the "plantation overgrown with brush and weeds – and a dismantled house standing open to the wind and rain."[58] Though not attacked by Yankee forces, the house lacked a patriarchal figure, so that the

[56] "At the Theatre," *State*, March 2, 1907, 5.
[57] Ibid.
[58] David K. Higgins, *At Piney Ridge* (New York: self-published by Higgins, 1906), 47.

returned general symbolizes the many men lost in the war and the other ways in which Southern land was indirectly harmed by the war.

The scene that most strongly pulls upon this heady and lost Southern – and American – past is in Act III of Augustus Thomas's *Alabama*. The action opens near the bayou, where a chorus of imagined black field hands (situated offstage) sing "Carry Me Back" into the night. The older ex-lovers meet. The man is a disguised Union veteran who has returned, prodigal-son like, to his Southern homestead to reclaim his family and his first love. The pair was separated and married others, but are now both widowed. The prodigal son Davenport (really Preston) remembers a time during the war, when "beyond the bayou there, the Confederate camp fires were like stars."[59] He revels in the (literal) moonlight and magnolias with "negro voices from the bayou in the same old songs."[60] They meet by a gate that Sherman and his men battered down, causing Davenport to declare that "it is beautiful—beautiful with its decay."[61] The reverie is interrupted by the senior Preston, who descends upon the scene and vehemently declares that the North took everything from him: "your North came to my peaceful little corner here, and ruined it."[62] Davenport tells Preston (actually his father, though Davenport has not revealed himself as junior yet) that Northern industrial advances have economically enhanced the South. He reminds his father that though he lost his slaves, "one freight car is worth a hundred of them at transportation," and that his "resentment…is eighteen years behind the sentiment of the day."[63] The family, lovers, and railroad plans are all secured by the end of the play, but the loss of the old South and its ways is never fully resolved.

Another moonlight and magnolias confrontation takes place in *The Carpetbagger*, though the violence is not only alive in memory here. An insulted Southern major – bristling at his false arrest and the tarnishing of his family name in connection with a murder – appears at

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[59] Thomas, *Alabama*, 86.
[60] Ibid, 87.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid, 100.
[63] Ibid, 101.

the carpetbagger governor's mansion, challenging him to a duel. The Governor declares such a practice antiquated, but concedes: "if we must go back to romance, let's go 'way back. Meet me at midnight – alone – no seconds – in the garden out there by the magnolias. I'll be there with an extra saber at your disposal."[64] Out in the garden, as the older men prepare to duel, the Governor's love interest interrupts, asking if they have "forgotten that peace has come? Were not four years of this enough? Is this soil still thirsty for blood?...You may be enemies of each other but you are both friends of mine."[65] They lay down their swords, and the Governor ultimately clears the name of an old Southern family and mends his unethical carpetbagging ways, winning Mrs. Fairburn's heart in turn.

These tropes – the North as an invasive industrializing political power, the lamentation of the loss of slavery, the eventual realization from both sides that country and reconciliation are more important than past grievances – appear again and again in productions set in the post-war South. Even amidst the decay and the loss, the sentimental power of black song, wafting flower scent, and warm southern moonlight carries the characters – and the audience – back.

Back to what, precisely, is the question. The mythic Southern sites constructed and remembered on the stage were of course an ideologically altered dramatic setting. In the tradition of the many versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and minstrel productions, the South was often depicted as thick with rural romanticism. Many Northern and Western middle- class theatre goers would not necessarily have traveled to the South immediately after the war (and the time period when most of these plays were set), but by the 1880s and 90s more Northerners were using the railroads for Southern sojourns.[66] The touring productions would likewise offer Southern audience members a romanticized version of their own land. Taking audiences "back" was really taking audiences to a mythic, constructed space of Southern social order – gendered and racialized – and a world untouched by mass industrialization. A critic responding to the

[64] Opie Read and Frank S. Pixley, *The Carpetbagger* (unpublished typescript). 1898, 81.
[65] Ibid., 93.
[66] See Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), chapter 3.

revival of *Alabama* at Palmer's in 1891 promised audiences that they could "almost smell the scent of magnolia on the faint evening breeze," and that the "easy, indolent, drifting temperament of the South [is] in shaper contrast with the more alert and expeditious energy of Northern enterprise."[67] The critic makes no secret as to which he prefers: "the South is the more picturesque part of our country. The old social order of the South was a hundred times more romantic, pictorial, and interesting than any social order at the North either is now or has ever been."[68] These agrarian and rural settings ran counter to the urban industrialization of the North, only marginally admitting that the South was undergoing modernization as well. The decay itself was apparently an aspect of the Southern landscape that drew Northern tourists, since, as Nina Silber points out, "the presence of ruins" was a "distinctive contrast to Yankee blandness" and "indicated the absence of anything modern and industrial and typically northern."[69] Thus, there was not only nostalgia for a lost era but a contradictory appreciation that the era was indeed lost – and the need for lingering proof of its existence. There was pleasure on multiple levels that could be derived from the pathos of suffering women and plantation houses devoid of their former glory.

An alternative to the crumbling plantations also presented in these plays is the rural mountains of the South, as mentioned in the over-exuberant review of the scenic design of *In Old Kentucky* above. When David Higgins took his production of *At Piney Ridge* on tour, he acted the role of the hero, Jack Rose. Jack was raised humbly in the mountains: it is later revealed that he was switched at birth, and was actually the orphaned son of a prestigious Confederate colonel who died on the battlefield. Baby Jack was found wrapped in a gray CSA coat under a rose bush. Higgins incorporated both the possible landscapes for Jack into the production, considering his birthright and his presumed status. According to the script, three acts are set in and around a reclaimed plantation house, and one takes place by a cabin on Piney Ridge, a "wild, picturesque

[67] "The Drama. Palmer's Theatre—'Alabama,'" *New York Herald-Tribune*, November 3, 1891, 7.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 77.

mountain scene" with the "Tennessee River winding through the valley in [the] distance."[70] The resurrected – and once crumbling – plantation and the serene rustic mountain scene were both on display to give a heightened sense of Southern atmosphere [see images 14 & 15].[71] On its first tour through Rhode Island, the critic for the *Pawtucket Times* said that these settings were "exceedingly effective," showing the "out of the ordinary…river effect" in the "mountain heights…by day, and then in all the glory of a Southern moonlight [sic] night."[72] Sweeping mountain views were part of the attraction in *On the Mississippi* as well, where lower class white rural homesteads were situated, secluded from the plantations and slavery. Nina Silber locates the Northern interest in these settings due to the increased railroad activity through the mountains in the late nineteenth century. It is during this time that the public in some ways "'discovered'" this "purest and most patriotic of all the South's Anglo- Saxons," removed from slavery and the immigrant hordes – many of whom were depicted in GAR and other popular dramas as being steadfast and loyal to the Union during the war.[73] In the white mountaineers, Silber believes Northerners could find the "key to…reconciliation," since these rural folk represented "the essence of American nationalism…in their pioneer and Anglo-Saxon ways."[74] The mountain landscapes are not the home or place of business for any black characters, and the yearning for a simplistic white-dominated world is amplified in these dramatic landscapes. When the Anglo-Saxon characters descend the mountains however, they encounter the many African American characters that populate these sites of memories. The freed black characters still work the fields, play in a band for horse races, offer song in the distance, or labor in white homesteads.

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[70] Higgins, *At Piney Ridge*, 41.
[71] "David Higgins' Idyl of the Tennessee Mountains, At Piney Ridge," (New York: Strobridge Litho Company, c. 1900). Theatrical Poster Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. All images from this production are from this source.
[72] "A Homely Play at the Empire," *Pawtucket Times,* March 27, 1900, 5. Clearly the play was successful, touring with Higgins for several seasons and then being revived by Kenzie – who was also in the original production with Higgins, but had formed his own troupe and acted the role of Jack Rose.
[73] Silber, *Romance of Reunion,* 143-4.
[74] Ibid., 145.

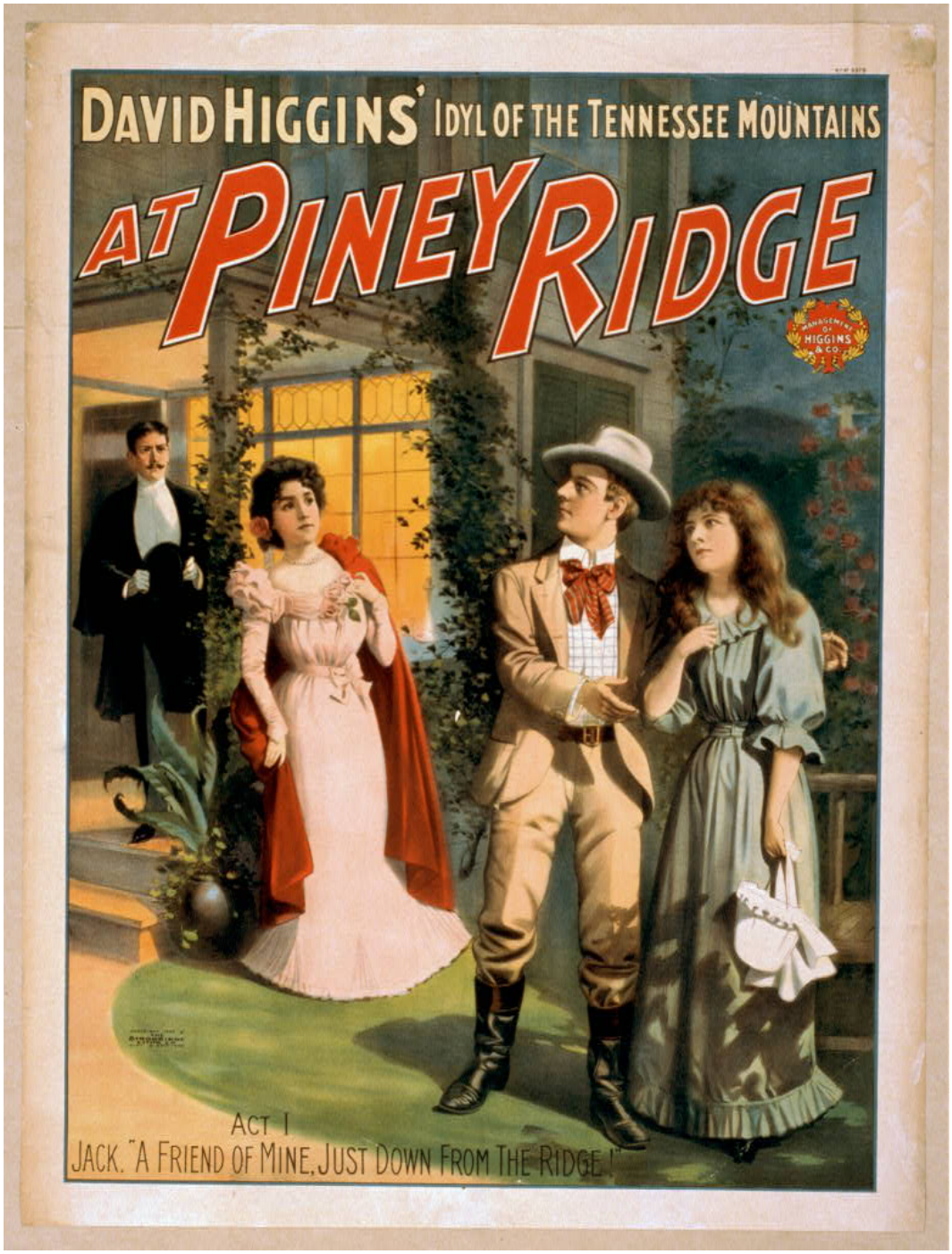

Image 14. Promotional poster for David Higgins's *At Piney Ridge*. New York: Stobridge Lith. Co., c. 1900. Theatrical Poster Collection, Library of Congress.

Image 15. Promotional poster for David Higgins's *At Piney Ridge*. New York: Stobridge Lith. Co., c. 1900. Theatrical Poster Collection, Library of Congress.

Not a *single* extant play set in the post-war South found for this survey fails to make the characteristically Southern setting explicit in the stage directions or in the reviews that detail the production values: the columns and porticos of crumbling or restored Southern plantation houses, the fields of cotton and crops, flowering verdant gardens bathed in moonlight, sweeping mountain panoramas where relatively untouched white populations reside. The Southern landscape is fetishized – acknowledged as already lost, but still longed for in its remnants, ruins, and soon spoiled rural landscapes. It is the melodramatic space of innocence that is a literal geographic space: forever lost, sought after in these stagings but already bemoaned and celebrated as being entirely impossible to achieve again. The impending industrialization of the South and the impossibility of maintaining prewar class and racial hierarchies are eclipsed, catering to a cultural need both North and South to establish white supremacy and imagine a lost Southern space that had fallen victim to the war, industrial growth, and an increasingly diversified nation.

In New York City and the other metropolitan areas where the majority of these productions originated, the unbounded open fields and mountains of Southern settings were quite appealing. As the population swelled with new waves of immigrants, city spaces increasingly felt more crowded. The victimization of the South enshrined the perceived supremacy of the white race, attempting to trump racial threats with a promise of renewed white fraternity and a future of Anglo-Saxon domination. White-dominated visions of the war offered respite to the dominant population during a time of massive changes in American culture and politics.

Plessy v. Ferguson **and Anglo-Saxons getting together**

When viewed from the present, the Progressive Era can appear as a backwards-looking period in regards to civil rights in the US. The legislative efforts and reform movements that characterized the era were in some respects a series of delayed responses to the explosive growth

in industrialization, immigration, and urban life; or belated attempts to control and homogenize the population to whatever extent possible. It is in this era – particularly with immigration law – that the powers of Falguni Sheth's theories of marking and then promptly excluding juridical rights from those deemed "unruly" become particularly apparent. When the arbitrariness and weakness of racial and ethnic constructions are threatened by exposure, an incredible amount of labor is invested into re-inscribing the fictitious boundaries and borders of dominant nations and peoples.

In his legal and intellectual history of citizenship prior to World War I, Richards Smith identifies the Spanish-American war in 1898 as the starting point of Progressivism in terms of the expansionist policies of the United States and locates in this conflict the brand of centrist progressivism and "exuberant new confidence" represented by Theodore Roosevelt.[75] However, many of the notions of race and a hierarchical social order were fixed prior to the start of the Spanish-American War, as mentioned during the discussion of the Gilded Age in chapter 2. Though Smith recognizes that there were splits within progressivism itself, he argues that centrist progressivism – which he claims to be the dominant force within this movement – wanted to impose "moral order" in the "turbulent world" by combining current technological/scientific advancements and the "finest cultural verities of the past."[76] These "verities" included anti-immigration sentiments, the maintenance of the male/female gender "domestic and civic" roles, and a firm belief in the "propriety of Anglo-Saxon racial domination."[77] Encounters with other races and ethnicities at home and abroad posed a threat to the perceived ubiquity of whiteness, but provided opportunities for the dominant white population to assert itself via legal and military maneuvers.

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[75] Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in US History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 411.
[76] Ibid., 413.
[77] Ibid. In fact, Smith identifies a four-tiered hierarchy of citizenship and rights established during the Progressive era that was dictated by race, ethnicity, and "ideological traits" – with Anglo-Saxon men sitting at the pinnacle of legal privilege. Blacks, Native Americans, and women were situated in the tier below Anglo-Saxon men, while more recent colonial acquisitions and groups encountered during the Spanish-American War sat at the bottom of this hierarchy. See Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 429.

The Spanish-American War was not just an exercise in American imperialism to assert Anglo-Saxon dominance. The conflict also provided an opportunity for soldiers from both the former Confederacy and the Union to join forces for national glory.[78] Sectionalist politics were set aside, and the Spanish-American War was interpreted as a "victory for white American unity."[79] The conflict presented an opportunity for a united American cause – domination of the non-white hordes. In a section devoted to witticisms in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1898 – tucked in amongst references to the Spanish American War ("If there are no chickens in Cuba we fail to see how an American army of foragers is ever going to be able to subsist and do business"), the author declares that "this appears to be a time when the Anglo-Saxon race has a tendency to get together."[80] The Anglo-Saxon race, in terms of Civil War memories, had been getting together for several years prior to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War.

Blue and Gray reunions were a regular feature of Civil War veteran encampments in the late nineteenth century, and the efforts of Confederate soldiers were appreciated along with those of the Union's. One instance in New York City displays the intersection of theatre and Confederate veterans' charity, highlighting the embrace of the Lost Cause in popular culture.[81] In 1896, the Confederate Veteran Camp held charity performances for the Confederate Mortuary Fund at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. All the actors and the theatre building managed by Harry Miner were donated for a Thursday afternoon performance in April, and several well-known companies and actors (including May Irwin, Maude Adams, and Joseph Jefferson) appeared in

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[78] Arthur Kahn's (using the pen-name Lee Arthur) play *We-Uns of Tennessee* (1899) dramatized the "union of the gray under one flag, to fight against Spain" in the spirit of this reunion. See "We 'Uns of Tennessee: A Melodrama of the South at Forepaugh's Yesterday," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 12, 1901, 5. This particular reviewer was not terribly fond of this plot device because he thought it "rings neither steadily nor true: the pathos is too pathetic, the clap-trap too apparent," but he was impressed by the "novelty" of the Spanish American war preparations as he felt the Civil War "practically exhausted."
[79] Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 181.
[80] *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1898, 6.
[81] Of course, New York City had its own Confederate sympathizers or those with business interests in the South during war time, and the Draft Riots of 1863 point to New York's class- and racially-conflicted groups that were not always supportive of the Union war effort.

excerpted acts or short playlets drawn from their repertoires.[82] The souvenir program reassured patrons that ticket sales would go towards the monument to Confederate veterans in Mount Hope Cemetery, a fifty-plus foot tall granite obelisk, beneath whose "somber shadows will sleep the battle-scarred warriors who gallantly fought for the 'lost cause.'" Quoting a *New York Tribune* editorial on the monument written several months earlier, the program declares the monument would be a symbol of "national heroism….the death and burial of old hatreds and the rebirth of national brotherhood…could not be better typified."[83] There were no protests to this benefit noted, but two Southern newspapers reported the event's success at raising an estimated $8,000 towards the monument.[84] Clearly, several important players in the New York theatrical community were willing to divest themselves of sectionalist agendas to honor the Lost Cause.

The "getting together" of whites mentioned above figured into larger cultural attempts to establish dominance and shore up the power and value of white appearance. As the first decade of the twentieth century saw an explosive rate of immigration, the anxiety over how to categorize and address this influx grew as well.[85] The reifying of Anglo-Saxon privilege via juridical means served to endorse and even legally sanction the repressive moves to segregate and provide separate but far from equal services and rights to a variety of racial and ethnic Others. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the US courts denied Others' claims of "whiteness" in

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[82] Harry Miner was an ex-New York Congressman, who – by the time of his death in 1900 – owned three theatres in New York and leased this Fifth Avenue building, and had owned several other theaters in urban areas on the East Coast prior to that. Miner also possessed a stake in the Syndicate in 1896. See *Pawtucket Times*, February 23, 1900, 7; "Harry Miner Wants to Travel," *New York Herald*, February 4, 1896, 7. At the charity event, May Irwin appeared for the first act of *The Widow Jones*—this musical comedy featured blackface minstrel routines, including a "pickaninny dance" performed by the white heroines who are interested in getting into show business, and opening the act with the song *The Darkey Cavaliers*. John Drew and Maud3 Adams played "a pair of lunatics" in a short sketch, the famed Joseph Jefferson and his company staged another short playlet, and the last act of the comedy *House of Cards* closed the theatrical activities. "Souvenir: Benefit Performance for Mortuary Fund of Confederate Veteran Camp," April 9, 1896. Veterans Collection, Richmond, Virginia: Museum of the Confederacy.

[83] Ibid.

[84] "A Successful Benefit," *State*, April 10, 1896, 1; "A Profitable Benefit for the Confederate Veterans in New York City," *Charlotte Observer*, April 10, 1896, 1. The former is a Columbia, South Carolina paper, the latter is out of North Carolina. The *Worcester Daily Spy* likewise noted the performance for its Massachusetts readers, but did not criticize or question the taste or political implications of this show. See *Worcester Sunday Spy*, April 12, 1896, 13.

[85] Richards claims that from "1901 to 1910 the rate of immigration relative to the national population was the highest in US history, more than ten per thousand." See Richards, *Civic Ideals*, 441.

what Ian Haney López defines as eleven of the twelve prerequisite cases.[86] Haney López discusses at length how these prerequisite cases – trials that were a "case-by-case struggle to define who was a 'white person'" – revealed how much the judges and laws grappled with ascertaining whiteness, and how deeply ambiguous this process of fixing whiteness could be. The results of these decisions, however, were starkly unambiguous: the denial of full citizenship or rights to those deemed to fall outside the parameters of whiteness.[87] The Supreme Court managed to "shore up the fractured definition of Whiteness by embracing popular prejudice."[88] Throughout Reconstruction and after, political rights gained by African Americans by the passage of the Civil Rights amendments were stripped little by little with the decline of Reconstruction, in the guise of voting restrictions, the Court's dismantling of Reconstruction Civil Rights laws, and other oppressive legal measures. The death knell came with the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, wherein the Supreme Court declared segregation legal in Louisiana – and thus, by extension, in the country, claiming that separate but equal doctrines in no way violated the rights guaranteed to men. The Court went on to say that that Homer Plessy's lawyers – including Albion Tourgée – were incorrect in the "assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely *because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it*."[89] The decision further stated that there was no way "social prejudices may be overcome by legislation," and that "if one race be inferior to another socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane."[90] The decision, penned by Justice Henry Billings Brown, initially declares that inferiority is not real but is *perceived* by black people, and then almost in the same breath implies that social inferiority is indeed a reality that the courts cannot be responsible for correcting. The instability of racial constructions and the

[86] Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 43.
[87] Ibid., 2.
[88] Ibid, 139.
[89] Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 210 (US Supreme Court 1896). Emphasis mine.
[90] Ibid.

simultaneous exclusionary tendencies that racial constructions allow are brought into sharp juxtaposition in this majority opinion. The dissenting opinion by Justice John Marshall Harlan – the sole dissenter – was prescient:

> In my opinion, the judgment this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott case….it seems that we have yet, in some States, a dominant race – a superior class of citizens, which assumes to regulate the enjoyment of civil rights, common to all citizens, upon the basis of race…what can more certainly arouse race hate, what more can certainly create and perpetuate a feeling of distrust between these races, than state enactments, which, in fact, proceed on the ground that colored citizens are so inferior and degraded that they cannot be allowed to sit in public coaches occupied by white citizens?[91]

This distrust between races is precisely what the white supremacist vision of the war capitalized on. The produced sites of memories that promulgated the white reunion/supremacist visions were so appealing because many of these productions would raise the specter of racial violence, and then promptly return it to its grave. Issues of trust are played out repeatedly via these theatrical productions set in the postwar South: the loyal slave stereotypes of blacks are rewarded, whereas black characters – mostly played by whites in blackface – who threaten this racial order and act against this perceived inferiority are regularly "put back in their place," as sanctioned by *Plessy v. Ferguson*. While the presence of black characters was meant to lend region-specific "atmosphere" and authenticity to these productions, it also quelled race-based anxieties. Since the early nineteenth century, white fear of race revolts due to the large African American population in the South was constant: the fact that slavery was over did not necessarily lessen this fear. As African Americans were voted into state legislatures in the Reconstruction South, dystopian racist nightmares of blacks stuffing ballot boxes and desecrating the inner sanctums of governance were depicted in political cartoons and on the stage. The tropes of African Americans who "knew their place" and those that defied white supremacy were both explored in produced sites of white supremacist Reconstruction memories.

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[91] Ibid.

With only two documented exceptions to the produced plays set in the postwar South, black characters were played by white actors blacking up for these performances. *In Old Kentucky* presents a deviation from this pattern, in that there were black extras who performed as singers and dancers. The script calls for a pickaninny band playing "Dixie" in the second act and "A Street in Lexington" in act III, and the New York initial production also added a "double quartette of plantation singers."[92] The "twenty little darkies" that made up the pickaninny band in the original production were "secured in the South and trained by the management especially" for the show and were "considered a decided novelty" by New Yorkers. [see image 16][93] Tom Fletcher, an African American actor who documented his decades in the business, mentions working for one touring version of *In Old Kentucky*. He explains how the touring productions would hire supers, "both colored and white, for atmosphere," with one of his black colleagues receiving a half-dollar per performance.[94] Some of these supers would compete with cast members at a buck-and-wing dance contest, which would then also be featured during the race track scenes.[95] African American extras were also used in *On the Mississippi*, a "host of genuine negroes" and a "lot of darkey youngsters" who were employed for "music and dancing."[96] Atmosphere could be hired, and – as with some of the productions discussed in the prior chapter – African American singers and dancers could supply the romantic racism of Southern landscapes, lending a backdrop of authenticity while their marked bodies were exploited by theatrical producers and consumers.

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[92] "In the Theatres," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 17, 1894, 24. The unpublished manuscript for the production also provides instructions to stock companies that might want to stage the show but cannot find African American performers.
[93] "In Old Kentucky," *State*, December 6, 1894, 3; "In Old Kentucky," (New York: Strobridge Lith Company, c. 1894). Theatrical Poster Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.
[94] Tom Fletcher, *100 Years of the Negro in Show Business* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1954), 22, 147.
[95] See Hill, *Tap-Dancing America: A Cultural History*, 21.
[96] "At the Playhouses," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 3, 1895, 14. Another Philadelphia paper describes the acts in more detail, mentioning that there was "buck dancing" and "Musical selections by the Trocerzoo Band, composed of real plantation darkies." It is not clear if the band and other performers were regular cast members or were part of the supernumeraries: it seems more likely that they were also hired supers that the company employed when they got into town. See "Walnut Street Theatre," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 23, 1894, 10.

Image 16. Promotional poster for Dazey's *In Old Kentucky*. New York: Stobridge Lith. Co., c. 1894. Theatrical Poster Collection, Library of Congress.

Black characters with speaking lines, like Neb, the black servant of *In Old Kentucky*'s hero, were played by white actors in blackface. Loyal characters, such as Neb, provided "atmosphere" and the reassurance of a subservient black population, living only to serve their self-fashioned "masters," whether they were Yankee or Southern in origin. Neb also helped raise Frank and takes on his pain as his own: Neb remembers getting beaten by the ex-sweetheart of Frank's father, and dislikes Barbara and her father intensely. He tells Frank that Barbara broke both their hearts: "Oh, honey, I'se watched over you eber sence you wus a baby an' when I see how dat handsome face o' her's was a drawin' you on, it nigh bruk my old black heart, it did for shuah."[97] Like Neb, Decatur in *Alabama* is an old loyal servant of the Preston household. The old man recognizes the disguised Harry Preston upon his return, when both the ex-lover and Preston's own father fail to recognize the man. This same faith is invested in Miss Carey, Harry Preston's daughter, when she intends to elope. Her Northern sweetheart tries to give Uncle Decatur a coin for his troubles upon entrusting him with a letter for Carey's grandfather. Decatur thanks him but refuses, explaining that it "seems too missionary, sah."[98] When Decatur is questioned as to why he aided in this subterfuge, he can only explain that it is "because 'Catur loves her, sah….I'se done raised her. I raised her ma too, e'en most. I loved her ma, too, sah."[99] It is inherited devotion that causes Decatur to protect his masters and even refuse payment for his services. The only time that Decatur complains about his lot is when he must ride into town to get maple syrup because one of the Yankee visitors doesn't like New Orleans molasses.

He is not alone in his refusal of wages: Caroline of *The Sweetest Girl in Dixie* refuses to leave her ex-masters when Babbie explains that they will be "so miserably poor" and unable to pay her wages. Aunt "Calline" retorts:

> I don't care how pore yo' is. Wharever y' goes I'm gwing right wid you. Ef you gwine to live in a one room cabin, I'm gwine have a little shed right outside. I'm

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[97] Charles Dazey, *In Old Kentucky* (unpublished typescript). c. 1893. Performing Arts Research Collections, New York: New York Public Library, 4.
[98] Thomas, *Alabama*, 111.
[99] Ibid., 112.

> gwine to cook for you jes' as long as dares bref enough in dish body to move dese old black hands.[100]

Babbie collapses onto her shoulder, weeping. When the usurping Northern woman Judith offers Caroline ten dollars a month to cook for the house's new owners, Caroline refuses:

> Save you' bref 'oman, save you' bref. Kase if you was to give me $500 a minit I wouldn't do it. White 'oman, befo' I'd cook fo' you I'd stick dese hands in de fire and burn 'em off. I'd rather go to jail fo' de rest of my life than to live in de house wif you an' dat hatchet faced brother of you'm.[101]

When Judith threatens to look in the sack (where the measly remains of the family's fortune are stowed) Caroline is carrying, she promises to "fling dis sack around and bust y' skull."[102] Aunt Caroline, after being struck with an umbrella by Judith, delivers, flinging Judith downstage. Judith's brother is receiving a humbling punishment outside simultaneously, as the old patriarch of the family (Babbie's father) knocks around the greedy carpetbagger outside the house. Caroline's husband Uncle George hops around in excitement, reporting on the melee. The fighting ends and the financial ruin of the family is averted because Caroline telegraphed Babbie's true love interest – a rich family friend who had relocated to the North – and who she rejected earlier in an attempt to save the house. It is also Caroline who shoos the old Colonel and her own husband off the stage as the curtain falls, ensuring that the young lovers are left alone and that all obstacles impeding their union are removed.

Other loyal servants abound: Aunt Lindy in Sterling's *On the Suwanee River*; Aunt Doshey and Joshaway in *Under Southern Skies* (with their granddaughter, 'Anner Lizer, in a Topsy-esque role); Mammie and Bacon (!) Greene – the sharecroppers in *Down in Dixie* who are fiercely protective of the poor white heroine and their fellow worker Georgia [see image 17]; and Sol in *The New South*.[103] As mentioned in chapter 2, Falguni Sheth theorizes a "moral

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[100] Slemons, *Sweetest Girl in Dixie*, 25.
[101] Ibid., 30.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Sol's presence in this list is a bit more dubious than the others. The script at the New York Public library is clearly a performance text: seemingly the script for William A. Brady, as his name is on the cover page and there are notes for his character's dialogue and stage directions for his scenes as well. In that script all of Sol's scenes have been cut. If he did, indeed, make it into any stage productions, he would

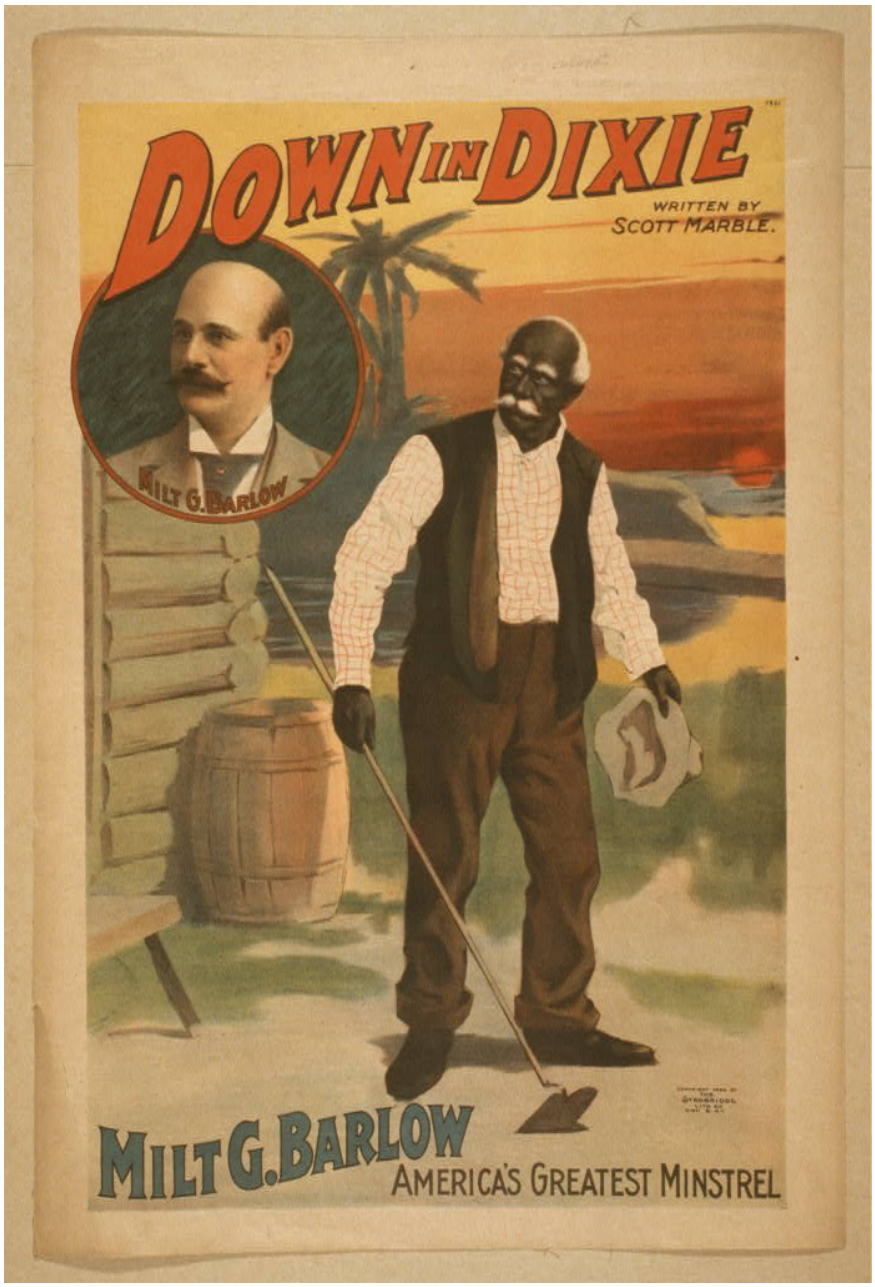

Image 17. Promotional poster for Marble's *Down in Dixie*. New York: Stobridge Lith. Co., c. 1896. Theatrical Poster Collection, Library of Congress.

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have assured the heroine Georgia – when asked if he is "going to be disobedient like the rest" – that he's "got too much respek for my young Missy to be disobedium." Clay M. Greene and Joseph R Grismer, *The New South* (unpublished typescript). c. 1893. Performing Arts Research Collections, New York: New York Public Library, act I, 18.; "Down in Dixie Written by Scott Marble" (New York: Strobridge Lith. Co., c. 1896). Theatrical Posters Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. This is an image of Milt G. Barlow playing Bacon Greene.

gauge" population that becomes an ethical barometer for the treatment and exclusion of other races: this population is tentatively accepted.[104] Subservient black characters that "know their places" in the stratified world of *Plessy v. Ferguson* serve as the moral gauge in produced sites of memories set in the post-war South. The majority of the black characters are loyal to the hierarchies of slavery, willing to work – at times *without wages* – to serve old masters, suggesting that the only divide in the United States still is, or at least should be, Anglo-Saxon white and black. The proliferation of races and ethnicities that were increasingly encountered at home and abroad could be temporarily ignored in the darkened theatre as Gilded Age and Progressive-era audiences consumed these postwar sites of embodied memories, the overwhelming influx of diversity simplified by the racial algorithms of the Southern plantation system.

Many of the productions mentioned thus far in this chapter did not explicitly establish white supremacy and juridical status to the extent of a handful of extant plays that incorporate the Ku Klux Klan into their plots. The presence and the use of the KKK as a dramatic device changed the racialized Southern landscape drastically, imbuing war memories with the promise of post-war violence. While the KKK is a confirmed part of only five productions set in the post-war South, the centrality of the Klan to the white supremacist history of this country and the Lost Cause narrative in popular culture places these productions in a separate category.[105] The history (and future) of the Klan is already being reinterpreted in these productions, fashioning

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[104] Falguni Sheth, *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 130.

[105] Only four of these productions—*Fool's Errand, On the Mississippi, The Clansman,* and *The Traitor* have extant scripts. There is evidence that the fifth, a play called *The Ku Klux Klan*, was produced in Texas in 1911 by the Demorest Comedy Company, but the playwright is not mentioned and very little information (beyond the fact that the play had a romance as its center) is available on the production itself. See "Amusements," *Beaumont Enterprise,* January 28, 1911, 10. The Klan also appeared as part of at least one vaudeville act at Baltimore's New American Theatre in 1869, and as the subject of two burlesque end-pieces at minimum. See "Dramatic Fenilleton," [i.e., Feuilleton] *Turf, Field, and Farm,* June 9, 1868, 6; "Display Ad 1," *Sun*, May 17, 1869, 2; and Classified Ad 20, *Sun*, October 21, 1871, 2. It is safe to assume that there are other instances of the Klan on the commercial stage—both in vaudeville/variety shows and as part of "legitimate" (or, at the very least, straight play) theatre. Since scripts are extant for only the ones above – and there is not enough information to glean how the Klan appears or functions in the other instances – these four are necessarily the main focus of analysis here.

the Reconstruction-era KKK as a noble group, high-jacked by lower class thugs and criminals. Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s *The Clansman* must figure prominently here, as it was not only the most financially successful of these Klan plays, but also because of its enduring legacy as the inspiration for D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*.

"The Klan, Glory to God, the Klan!"

The Klan is not always the savior of the white race in the performed sites of memories set in the Reconstruction South, but it is not often convicted of outright villainy either. The Klan remains an ambivalent presence in productions set in the post-bellum South. The historical reality of the often sexualized violence of the Klan was not only due to what Lisa Cardyn calls "exaggerated white fears of emerging black political and social power," but was also of a "deeply personal nature, driven as they were by a set of imperatives that included regenerating a white masculinity severely depleted by defeat in war."[106] The only reference to the Klan in this subset of plays that even suggests this brand of violence (without any sort of caveat or explanation of high-jacking), is not even accompanied by an appearance of white hoods on stage. In *The Carpetbagger*, the Northern governor of Mississippi laughs off a death threat but quickly sends the militia to a town when informed via telegram that the sheriff he recently installed there was "assassinated" by the "kuklux."[107] The governor seems to take this in stride, telling his daughter later that the "*war* ended then; the *warfare* didn't." He tells her that they are "visiting the plundered camps of the enemy," and even though "we've quit *shooting* each other….the *fighting* is hotter than ever."[108] This is not entirely accurate: they are still shooting each other, as the earlier telegram reveals. Though the Klan does not appear or receive another reference beyond this one, the association of this organization with Confederate resentment and extreme extralegal violence is not, in any way, veiled or explained away.

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[106] Lisa Cardyn, "Sexualized Racism/Gendered Violence: Outraging the Body Politic in the Reconstruction South," *Michigan Law Review* 100, no 4 (Feb 2002): 762.
[107] Read and Pixley, *The Carpetbagger*, 13.
[108] Ibid., 18. Emphasis in original.

The other depictions of the Klan, however, tend to remove the politicized nature of the Klan or – in the case of Dixon's *oeuvre* – make the claim that the Klan's violence is never extreme or unwarranted when it is enacted under the auspices of the ennobled ex-Confederate officers and sons of the planter class. The first documented instance of the Klan in a professional, commercial production adheres to this early Klan mythology. In the fall of 1881, Steele MacKaye premiered his stage adaptation of Albion Tourgée's novel *A Fool's Errand* at the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia. Though the novel and play shared the same name, MacKaye had distinctly departed from the Radical Republican source text. Tourgée had drawn upon his own experiences as a carpetbagger Republican judge in the Reconstruction South, where he often came into conflict with the Klan. MacKaye knowingly politically neutered the text for the stage play, writing to his wife that he "cut out the political verbiage of Judge Tourgée." [109] To do this, MacKaye made John Burleson the protagonist of the stage-play, whereas the protagonist of the novel was the "fool," Judge Servosse. Because he was working within the dramatic structure of melodrama, MacKaye also invented his hero's paramour Maude Bradley, while substantially expanding and altering the relationship of Lily Servosse (the Fool's daughter) and the secondary hero, Melville Gurney. Burleson and Gurney are Southern gentlemen, plantation and prior slave owners, who are also secretly members of the KKK at the play's opening. MacKaye further manipulated the novel to conform to the demands of popular melodrama and its audience and "brought it down to my own dramatic action," and that his re-writing of the text "obtained laughter – applause – silence – tears, precisely where I calculated upon doing so."[110] Along with these and a host of other substantial changes, MacKaye also added some stage types – an Irish servant and a Topsy-esque black maid – for comic relief. In reducing his source's "political verbiage," MacKaye also absolved the Klan of one of the most damning murders. In Tourgée's novel, "Uncle Jerry had been noted for his openly-expressed defiance of the Ku-Klux," and in

[109] Dean H. Keller, "Introduction", in Steele MacKaye and Albion W. Tourgee, *A Fool's Errand*, edited by Dean H. Keller (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1969), 12.
[110] Ibid.

retaliation his body later hangs on a tree near the town's courthouse as white worshipers congregate for Sunday prayers: "all except the brown *cadaver* on the tree spoke of peace and prayer."[111] The Klan does not lynch Jerry in the production. Burleson – played by MacKaye in the production – only scolds Jerry, his family's former slave, for "tryin' to spoil my niggers – enticing them off to school," explaining that the "Yanks have made you free to work and take care for yourselves – but not to lie around and loaf and brag as if you were the equals of white folks."[112] Jerry says that he "means ter lead my people out ob de darkness," and the only threat that Burleson makes to Jerry is that "the next time you coax my niggers off the plantation, he'll lose his place and have you to thank for it."[113] As he leaves, Burleson orders Bill Sanders – a lower-class white man who is one of the villains of the piece – that "he's not to raise any row here…and see that you leave these niggers alone."[114] Bill informs Burleson that he was just inducted into the Klan, leading a worried to Burleson to declare as an aside that "when creatures like this join the ranks, it's time gentlemen fell out!"[115]

John Burleson is right to be concerned: Bill and his accomplice attempt to assassinate the "nigger-lovin' Colonel" Servosse, but end up literally stabbing Burleson in the back instead.[116] Burleson has been hanging about the Servosse residence as he has – much to his dismay – fallen in love with their guest Maude, a Northern "nigger teacher" (as he endearingly calls her).[117] The threat of interracial violence almost comes to a head when Bill attempts to arrest Jerry for Burleson's supposed murder. Black servants and Jerry arm themselves with guns, as Bill tries to convince the local magistrate that Burleson was murdered by Jerry. Burleson appears, alive, to disrupt Bill's plan and finger him as the attempted murderer: Bill blackmails Burleson, threatening to expose him and the other Klan members to the government.

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[111] Albion Winegar Tourgée, *A Fool's Errand,* New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1879 (202, 206).
[112] Steele MacKaye and Albion W. Tourgée, *A Fool's Errand*, edited by Dean H. Keller (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1969), 41.
[113] Ibid., 42.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 43.
[116] Ibid., 53.
[117] Ibid., 36.

These "dangerous men" – lower class men like Bill and his ilk – betray what the heroes see as the Klan's basic mission to "redeem the South."[118] During a Klan meeting in a glen, Gurney is ordered to execute Servosse, but he has secretly wed Lily Servosse. Apart from the other den members, Burleson suggests that Gurney "revolt" and proposes an alternate plan. The "purpose" of the Klan, according to Burleson, was "to frighten niggers from the poles [sic], and so prevent nigger rule in the south."[119] However, this mission is not critiqued outright in the course of the play, and the heroes voice no renunciation of this wish and belief. It is because the "scum of our state have crept into our ranks, prostituting its power to murder for mere personal revenge" that Burleson raises his objections, convincing his friend that they must "face and baffle those that disgrace our southern manhood" and enact his plan "for the deliverance of the south from the tyranny of these fiends!"[120] Here, "these fiends" are not Servosse and the carpetbaggers, but lower class whites —"dangerous men" who violated what the heroes perceive as the tenets of the Klan. The heroes turn against the Klan they no longer recognize and in doing so solidify their claims to their Yankee sweethearts.

There is, however, no indication of the abandonment of Southern Confederate chivalry with all its misogyny and racism. Indeed, the "attack" on the Klan seems rather toothless here, with no indictment of its initial aim to juridically oppress African Americans. At one point, the Klan robes are even irreverently donned by a stage Irishman to tease and terrify a minstrel black maid in a comic scene. Burleson confesses to the authorities and inspires a host of other Klan members to do likewise. Servosse claims that "John Burleson's bravery has ended the power of the Klan."[121] Even when Bill attempts to frame Burleson for the death of another Radical Republican, it is revealed in the final scene that Bill killed the man "to gratify a private malice of his own."[122] As he is dragged off stage, Bill curses "the traitors that hev broken up the Klan" and

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[118] Ibid., 78.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 91.
[122]Ibid., 106.

challenges them to "hang me too fer hatin Yanks and nigger-lovin whelps like these."[123] Burleson and Gurney at no point declare that they are "nigger-lovin," nor articulate any belief in racial equality, and they certainly do not embrace Servosse's cause. Because they *would* quite like to embrace the Yankee women in the Servosse house, however, the heroes actively oppose the high-jacked Klan that threatens the family of their lovers. Though Bill and his friend, enraged by her mockery, do attack Achsah – the Topsy figure and the daughter of Jerry – they are interrupted before they can do her real harm: in fact, the violence in this play is almost solely visited upon white men. At the Klan meetings, only white men are considered for execution. Servosse begs the pardon of Gurney and Burleson in the play's last lines, saying that he has "done you wrong and learned at last that some of the noblest hearts that live, beat beneath a southron [sic] breast!"[124] Burleson is in turn grateful that "this day has come…when we have learned that the whole country is better than any part. That to be an <u>American</u> is a grander thing than to be a northerner or a southerner!"[125] This forced sentiment at the play's close is nowhere to be found in the novel, but it certainly led to audience acclaim. The production was a popular success, though MacKaye never revised the play for a touring version with his company as he originally intended.

Some Philadelphia critics were not as forgiving as audiences in regards to MacKaye's alterations. One noted the dulling of political fervor, writing that "all the political element of the story has been eliminated from the dramatization" and that "there are no offensive political features or references in the play."[126] A more scathing review declared that the "conclusion is weak and conventional, and points no moral that we can see, unless it may be that Southern 'gentlemen' of Ku-Klux proclivities can only be turned from the errors of their ways by Northern

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[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., 106.
[125] Ibid. Emphasis in original.
[126] "Entertainments," *Ledger and Transcript*, October 27, 1881. Reprinted in *A Fool's Errand*, ed. Keller, 174-6.

women enticing them to fall in love."[127] While this production did not reach a nation-wide audience and was not revived in Philadelphia after the 1881 season, it has to be included in this survey for several reasons. By the merit of Tourgée and MacKaye's involvement alone, this is an important production in terms of theatre history. More crucial to my analysis, *A Fool's Errand* reveals the conflicts expressed by and the contradictions within the white supremacist vision. To strive towards the "grander thing" of being an "American," the divisive sectionalist politics of people like Tourgée had to be eschewed. One set of memories – those that most clearly conveyed the Union vision and the mission to eradicate slaveholding power – were subsumed by the need to establish a reunified white fraternity. The centrality of slavery to the war and the Confederate cause is also conveniently omitted, but the concept of racial inferiority that justified slavery remains. To be an American – northern or southern – in the staged sites of memories falling within the white supremacist vision demanded that spectators paradoxically forget the reasons for the Civil War, but remain dedicated to the premise of deeply undemocratic principles. These kinds of undemocratic principles allow Gurney, Burleson, and the imaginary "noble" founders of the Klan to go unpunished on stage. Tourgée's book was quite financially successful and popular, but MacKaye still felt a need to absolve the Klan's purported origins and to never directly tangle with racial equality as the future lawyer for Homer Plessy was inspired to do. The lower class white man became the scapegoat: Bill is a man without honor, perverting an organization to serve murderous personal vendettas rather than allowing it to serve its "noble" purpose of preserving prewar racial hierarchies and enforcing white rule. Much like the craven Confederates who used the war to wreak personal vengeance upon the GAR dramatic heroes, the postwar villains in these Klan plays exploit the sectional tension to their own gain, besmirching the Klan's honor in the process.

Though the gentleman-super at the start of this chapter was quite angered by William Haworth's representation of the Klan in *On the Mississippi*, his Klan is similar to MacKaye's. A

[127] "Dramatic," *Evening Telegraph*, October 27, 1881. Reprinted in *A Fool's Errand*, ed. Keller, 169-73.

personal revenge motive is also behind the assassination plot at the center of the play, and but here the Klan is working at the behest of the con man villain. The unsavory characters that manipulate the Klan at no point cite any sort of Southern pride, the war, or racism as being central to their mission – and neither does the Klan. This Klan will leave Tennessee to follow a Northern miner to New Orleans – where they masquerade in devil costumes for Mardi Gras no less, where he is being fleeced by the seductress in league with the villain Andre. Ruined, the deception revealed by the cruel seductress, Raymond goes off to commit suicide: he is again saved by his sweetheart in disguise, and his Yankee cousin Peabody (who is later revealed to be a Secret Service agent, sent to shut down the Klan). Peabody infiltrates the Klan. Peabody's relation to Raymond is unknown to Andre, and using his position Peabody disguises his cousin and gets him "initiated…into the order" so that Raymond can get into Andre's casino.[128] Instead of revenge, Raymond seeks sentiment: specifically, the locket with his mother's picture that he gifted to Celeste as a token of his (unreturned) affection, and which he wore into twenty-three Civil War battles for luck.[129] As he rips the jewelry from Celeste's neck (and takes off a titillating amount of torso fabric with it), Andre responds to her screams: in the ensuing tussle, she shoots Andre but blames Raymond for the bullet, and he flees with the Klan in pursuit. When they catch him in the swamp, the Klan members quickly expose their ignorance and ineptitude, squabbling over how to dispose of Ned and who will get his horse afterwards.[130] Raymond demands to be turned over to the law, but the gang leader and confirmed murderer, Sanborn, says "we uns ther law."[131] Like his fellows, he is clearly an uneducated, lower-class white man, who claims that they "got up…[their] sascieties foh jes sech critters es you uns." In response Raymond clarifies:

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[128] William Haworth, *On the Mississippi* (unpublished typescript). c. 1895. Performing Arts Research Collections, New York: New York Public Library, act III, 12.
[129] As part of his continuing bad fortune, Ned Raymond's mother is alive in Act I when he first shows Celeste the locket, but he loses his fortune and his mother by the beginning of Act II.
[130] On the initial tour, a "$5000 trained thoroughbred mare" by the name of Alice Morley filled the role of Raymond's mount. See "Walnut Street Theatre," *Philadelphia Inquirer*.
[131] Haworth, *On the Mississippi*, act III, 29.

> the societies you belong to were organized by southerners to protect the weak against the negroes, whom they thought would raise [sic] in arms, being free, to murder defenseless men, women and children. When southern men saw the negroes had no such intention, they dropped out, leaving behind them a lot of cut-throats and blacklegs like you. What the negros [sic] did not do you are doing, while they get the blame.[132]

Again, the original mission of the Klan – to protect the white race and its "innocents"—is not in and of itself denounced: the "cut-throats" and "blacklegs," the uneducated mercenaries who undertake violence for remuneration are not the *real* Klan. While *this* particular manifestation of the Klan is not endorsed by the hero/playwright, the initial purpose of such "societies" to "protect the weak against the negroes" is not attacked. Though Haworth's lines suggest that the Klan was superfluous, the intent of the Klan to maintain a threatened white supremacy is not denounced. The irate super that so frightened and excited Haworth confirms that white fear of racial violence was still quite real in the late nineteenth century. Of course, the idea that Haworth included the Klan in his show to make some kind of political statement is highly unlikely, as conveyed in his optimistic hopes for a hit and his earlier play. The Klan, like the painstakingly rendered scenery that he gathered images of, was presumably included to lend authenticity and spectacle to a plot device. One reviewer commented that the "weird and picturesque Ku Klux" lent atmosphere to the production, just as landscapes and black specialty acts did to this show and others.[133]

The most enduring depiction of the Klan in popular culture originated in Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s Reconstruction Romance trilogy of novels: *The Leopard's Spots* (1902), *The Clansman* (1905), and *The Traitor* (1907). Dixon, long-interested in theatre, adapted the first two novels into a stage play, and was both co-creator and co-financier of *The Clansman*.[134] The popularity of the stage play and its later cinematic adaptation served to fix the Klan and a white

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[132] Ibid.
[133] "At the Playhouses," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 3, 1895, 14.
[134] Melvyn Stokes provides a more detailed description of the business behind this initial transaction. See *D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation*: *A History of "The Most Controversial Motion Picture of all Time*," (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 47-8. More scholarly attention has been devoted to the play as of late, when often it was rarely even explored in connection to *The Birth of a Nation* or US Civil War memory.

supremacist interpretation of the war's aftermath into the US imagination. While the play itself is not considered a masterpiece of American theatre, nor is it typically even mentioned in surveys of US theatre history (and the text has never been published), its place within the trajectory of Civil War memory on stage, screen, and popular culture is significant. *The Clansman* was a hit, but this was an era of hits, where multiple touring companies presenting the same play were not unheard of. Klaw and Erlanger's agents were behind the booking process, so the Southern Amusement Company that Dixon had formed drew upon the Syndicate's monopoly for both the initial Southern tour and the later touring versions.[135] During a third act curtain call at the premiere in Norfolk, Virginia, Dixon got up to speak. He declared to the mixed-race audience that the production was a "sequel" to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, claiming that his object was to "teach the north, the young north, what it has never known—the awful suffering of the white man during the dreadful reconstruction period."[136] The historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage attributes Dixon's overall success throughout his writing career to his "use and talent" with "melodrama," which "enabled him to be heard over the cacophony of turn-of-the century America" and "to reach, with unusual force, the divided minds of his generation."[137] Melodrama provided a proven popular form—all Dixon had to do was cast the villain and lovers to convey the "awful suffering of the white man." Pitching it as a war between the races rather than a war between sectionalist war memories was nearer (and dearer) to Dixon's intended lesson. The "moral transparency and urgency" that Brundage sees in melodrama was certainly in keeping with Dixon's pedagogical, white supremacist mission.[138]

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Dixon's dramatic lesson is his unabashed white supremacy. Whereas other dramatic offerings and many cultural products served up fare with

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[135] David Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker: D. W. Griffith and the American Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 148.
[136] "'The Clansman' Scored Sensational Success," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 23, 1905.
[137] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Thomas Dixon: American Proteus," in *Thomas Dixon Jr. and the Birth of Modern America*, eds. Michele K. Gillespie and Randal L. Hall (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 32.
[138] Ibid., 33.

the outward appearance of endorsing democratic equality (even if it was feigned and/or situated it within a sliding scale of citizenship), Dixon blatantly fixed black/white relations into an explicitly antagonistic hierarchy. While his contemporaries were coping with the realities of life in the Progressive Era and, as David Mayer points out, grappling with "issues of intermarriage between races and different immigrant communities," Dixon "showed neither regret nor anxiety about racial discrimination."[139] However, Mayer also argues that the play deviates from prior melodramas, as Dixon's "narrative ventures into darkness beyond reconciliation, or even impotent stalemate, and ends in entropy."[140] From the play's outset, Dixon explores unchartered territory from his melodramatic predecessors into this "darkness beyond reconciliation." Whereas the other post-war productions opened on idyllic Southern settings, this one would have produced a jarring sensation: while the charming Southern house, with honeysuckle, roses, and a "rustic arbor" with "mountains seen in the distance beyond the river valley" are all familiar stage setting, the idyllic Southern atmosphere is disrupted by "characteristic crowds of negroes" including "negro troopers" milling about and stuffing the ballot box, while a handful of whites make their way to the Cameron house.[141] The first words of the play are spoken by a black preacher, who asks his followers: "Ain't I done tole ye dat de Lawd call de cullud men ter come up on high…de judgemen' day done come fur de white Man!"[142] While the scenic trappings would have been familiar to audiences who had seen post-war Southern plays on stage, the dramatic action is already radically different. The only "crowds" of blacks that appeared would have done so *In Old Kentucky* and in *On the Mississippi* as part of

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[139] Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker*, 140-141. Mayer in broad strokes rightly and neatly situates Dixon's and Griffiths' work within a lineage of Civil War stage plays, charting the move from amateur GAR dramas to reunion, non-partisan, professional melodramas of the late nineteenth century. He has done extensive analysis of Dixon's play in relation to D.W. Griffith's film, and also correctly identifies the stage play as the primary text for the film adaptation. A version of the stage play script can be found in Griffith's papers at the Museum of Modern Art, and Griffith certainly drew heavily upon this text for his screen version.
[140] Ibid., 148.
[141] Thomas Dixon, Jr., *The Clansman* (unpublished typescript). 1905. D.W. Griffith Papers, NewYork: Museum of Modern Art, act I, 1. Dixon begins re-paginating with every new act, so all citations will include the act number as well.
[142] Ibid.

novelty and specialty acts, singing and dancing to lend entertaining atmosphere rather than a menacing presence. Blacks mob the polls and illegally stuff the ballot box off-stage in *The New South*, and that play presents the only African American character that appears villainous in the plays surveyed here prior to *The Clansman*.[143] Whether Dixon – or Griffith – had seen any of these predecessors cannot be confirmed, though both had ties to the theatrical world and did indeed see many productions. More importantly, the depiction of a stage dominated by blacks – not working in a field, or benignly singing and dancing, or even participating in a black community as in the contemporaneous black musicals – but declaring the end of the White Man and explicitly making a travesty of the democratic voting process would have sharply and immediately created a rift between earlier audience expectations and Dixon's racial melodrama.

At its most simplistic, *The Clansman* establishes the need for the Klan in the South immediately following the war. White women's virtue is at stake – the white women closest to the hero are also the most threatened. Flora, the hero's younger sister, commits suicide rather than be raped by a black man. Cameron's sweetheart Elsie, daughter of the carpetbagger August Stoneman, must be revenged or protected by the Klan. The racial politics of August Stoneman – based on Thaddeus Stevens, who Dixon seemingly believed was nothing short of demonic – jeopardize the virtue of white women. White men – abused and divested of voting and political power by the corrupt Radical Republican process – must be reinstalled as the head of the hierarchy. General Nathan Forrest makes a brief fictional cameo, convincing the hero Ben Cameron that the South is at the brink of destruction. He describes his visit to the "black parliament at work":

> I…watched them through fetid smoke, vapors of stale whiskey and the deafening roar of half drunken brutes, while they voted millions in taxes their leaders had already stolen, and I had a vision. I stood beside the open grave of the South! Beneath that minstrel farce I saw a tragedy as deep and dark as was ever woven of

[143] In *The New South,* Sampson manipulates the political situation to better his position. Unfortunately, he does not seem very adept at this sort of subterfuge: after Sampson stabs a white Democratic Southerner who threatens the black Republican vote, he frames a Northern officer who has come to protect the black voting process.

> the blood and tears of the conquered people. I heard the death rattle in the throat of my race, barbarism strangling civilization by brute force.[144]

At the vortex of this white race death is Silas Lynch, a mulatto who lusts after Elsie, dupes Stoneman, and manipulates the common, ignorant blacks around him to try and assert his domination. The Klan dispatches of one of Lynch's henchmen, Gus, the would-be rapist of Flora, in a dramatic and macabre cave scene, where the white-hoods rode on live horses, lit a cross, hypnotized Gus to affirm his guilt, and then summarily dispatched him after a ritualistic blood-pouring [image 18].[145] As Ben pours his sister's blood, diluted with water, in the cave, he swears revenge "on this spot made holy ground by the sacrifice of a daughter of the South…I raise the symbol of an unconquered race of men – I quench its flames in the sweetest blood that ever stained the sands of time" [image 19].[146] It is only the Klan who can see through Lynch's devilish plots, and as he makes his final grab for power – and Elsie – it is the Klan who literally burst forth on the scene as knights in white hooded finery. Unlike Thaddeus Stevens, Stoneman cannot stomach amalgamation in reality (especially and hypocritically when it involves his daughter), and cries out in thanks when the Klan interrupts the impending forced marriage of Elsie to Lynch: "The Klan, Glory to God, the Klan!" [image 20]. Stoneman promises to withdraw his earlier protest of the Klan to the president, and will ask that the "army be withdrawn and water be allowed to find its own level." [147]

Clearly, the sites of memories performed by the three different touring companies of *The Clansman* left little room for ambiguous interpretations of the Klan. The first company traveled South after the Norfolk tour, and the reception below the Mason-Dixon was enthusiastic throughout the fall of 1905. The play's brand of bigotry was approved by white Southern audiences, with a Norfolk critic claiming that the premiere production "only reiterates to

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[144] Dixon, *Clansman*, act II, 22.
[145] *The Clansman, an American Drama: From His Two Famous Novels The Leopard's Spots and The Clansman: Presented by the Southern Amusement Company* (New York: American News Company, 1905). These images are of the New York cast prior to the opening as part of a promotional pamphlet.
[146] Dixon, *Clansman*, act III, 30.
[147] Ibid., act IV, 29.

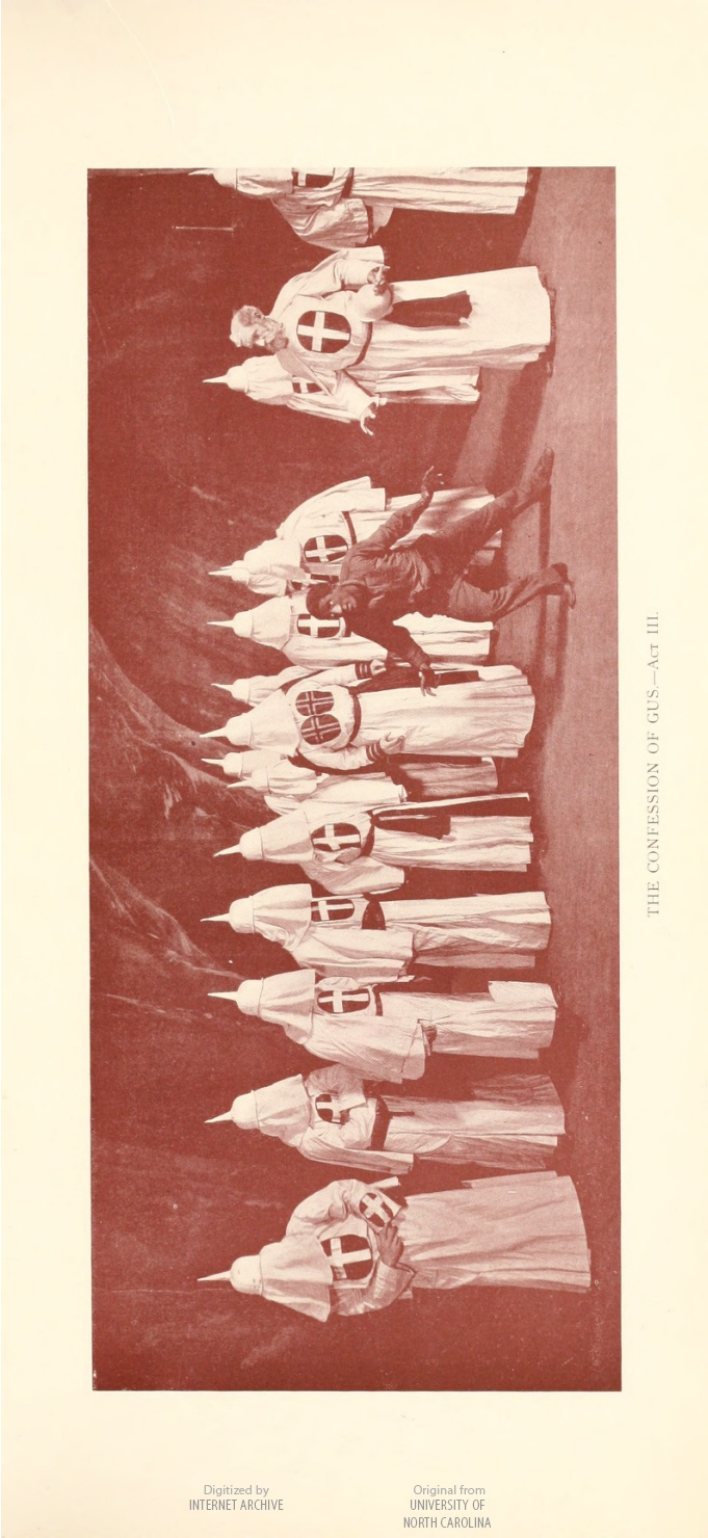

Image 18. The hypnosis of Gus. Archival evidence suggests that these images are from the company that played in the New York premiere before touring. This and the following two images are from the promotional program *The Clansman: An American Drama* (New York: American News Co., 1905). Images are public domain.

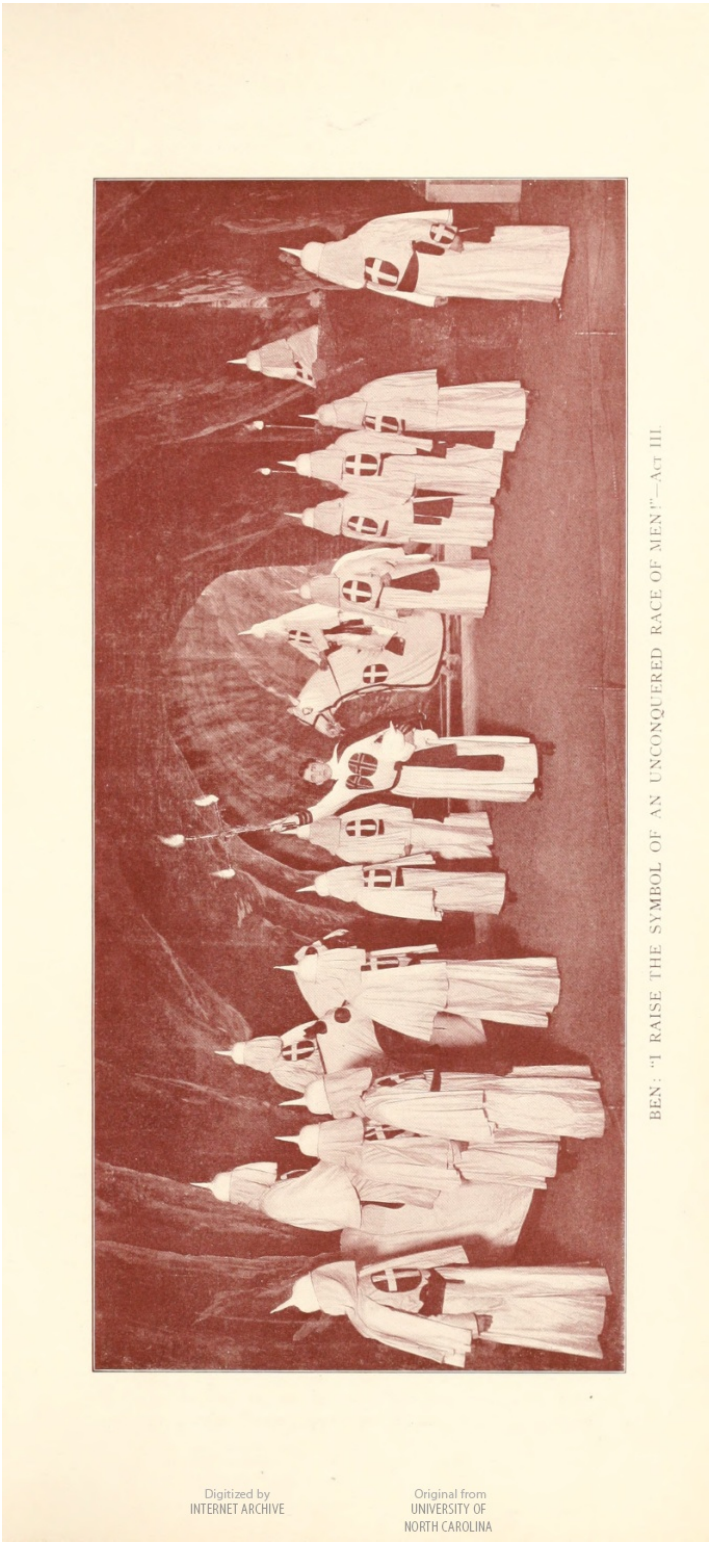

Image 19. The sacrifice after Gus is taken out to be lynched.

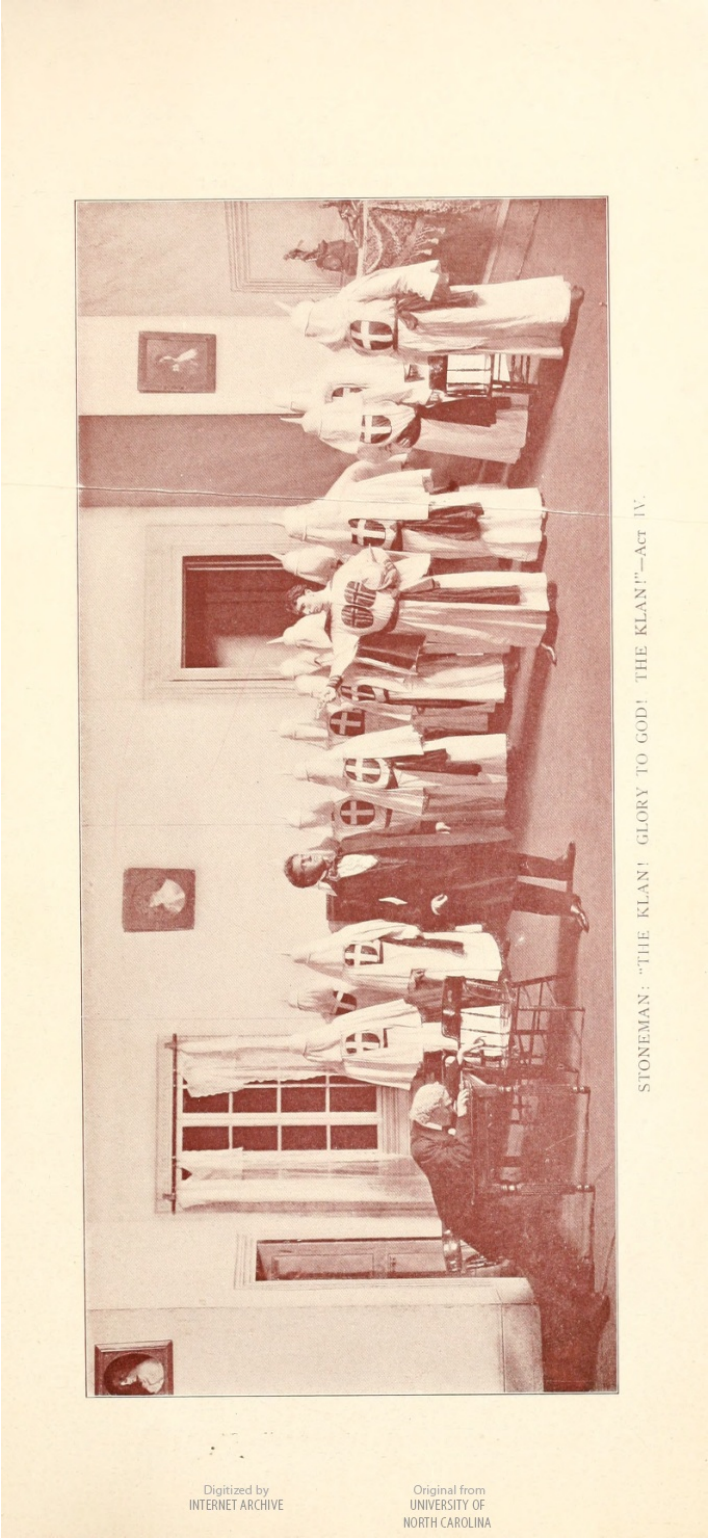

Image 20. The Klan bursts in and saves a grateful Stoneman (and his daughter) from the villain, mulatto Silas Lynch.

southern people what they already know."[148] The spectacle and scandal of the production inspired disgust and fandom alike – but sold many tickets either way. The initial Southern leg of the tour grossed close to $10 thousand a week in ticket sales.[149] A critic for the *Washington Post* admitted that the "whole South is now given over to hysterical controversy apropos of Mr. Thomas Dixon's play."[150] Even as some press denounced the play – North and South, though the dissenting voices were much louder in the North – and protests flared up on occasion during the many years of touring company productions, the play in its various touring manifestations remained popular for years.

The press surrounding *The Clansman* contains the only documentation of African American reaction to any of these sites of memories incorporating the Klan. At the Norfolk premiere, African American audience members sat in the gallery, a space sneeringly referred to as "nigger heaven" by white theatre attendees in the South. They were "packed and jammed" by the hundreds there, and the reviewer claimed that they emitted "hisses [that] were just as cutting as those of the whites, but they were directed at the white characters" – and in particular at Stoneman.[151] The review does not clarify when the hisses from the gallery were loudest, but one must assume that when Stoneman begins to reject and express horror at the realities of racial equality – namely, the mulatto who wishes to bed his white daughter – that the black audience turned on a seeming political ally. While the reviewer might have inflated the number of black audience members in this instance, it is clear that many (white and black alike) found Dixon's overt white supremacist message troubling. African American protesters appeared in Philadelphia as well – both in the theatre house and outside – and several Western towns banned the production from appearing there, but no serious repercussions that jeopardized the fiscal and popular success occurred.[152]

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[148] "'The Clansman' Scored Sensational Success," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 23, 1905.
[149] Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker,* 154.
[150] "Tom Dixon and His Clansman," *Washington Post*, November 9, 1905, 6.
[151] "Clansman" *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 23, 1905.
[152] Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker,* 156-157.

The explicitly negative portrayal of African American and mixed-race characters throughout *The Clansman* leaves little room for argument with regard to Dixon's racial philosophy. The black characters and the mulatto villain are corrupt, evil, mostly ignorant (Lynch, half white, being the sole exception), and rapacious, save for the two harmless (though still ignorant) loyal ex-slaves of the Camerons – who at least know their place in the bigoted world of the play, and refuse to vote Republican. Dixon declared in an interview that he did not believe the "people of the south are such drilling idiots" that they would "rush home from a theatre in their Sunday clothes, grab a gun and kill a negro just because he is a negro."[153] He hoped that the play would even "allay…race antagonism and race hatred," though how such an alleviation of tensions could occur on account of a cultural product so committed to endorsing racial inequality is not clear.[154] Connections between the theatrical productions and real-life race violence were soon drawn, and some proved that they were indeed "drilling idiots." Very early during the first Southern tour, an African American man named Gus Goodman – who allegedly shot a white sheriff – was lynched in Georgia. One paper directly attributed the violence to the production, claiming that the "feeling against negroes, never kindly, has been imbittered [sic] by the Dixon play."[155] Others believed that the play also led to the 1906 Atlanta race riots, and the play was not allowed to be revived there following that initial tour.[156] Violence against African Americans was hardly new in the American South: though the Klan in its early Reconstruction period was a short-lived and rather disorganized vigilante group, the lynchings and violence perpetrated in the name of protecting white privilege/sexuality did not end with the removal of

[153] "Tom Dixon Talks of the Clansman," *Atlanta*, October 29, 1905, b2.
[154] Dixon was quite public in his declamations of racial inequality. Booker T. Washington happened to be visiting New York at the time of *The Clansman*'s Broadway premiere at the Liberty Theatre in 1906. Dixon offered Washington a ten thousand dollar donation to Tuskegee Institute if he would revoke his belief in racial equality during his upcoming appearance at Carnegie Hall in front of an audience consisting of the Rockefellers, several Peabodys, and Mark Twain. Washington did not bother to reply, and in his speech on January 22 he certainly did not declare the black race inferior. See Anthony Slide, *American Racist*: *The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 62.
[155] "Drama Inspire Negro Lynching," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* October 30, 1905, 4.
[156] Stokes, 51-2. Stokes does not mention the Atlanta ban, but in a later article on *The Traitor* playing in Atlanta the press agent Herrick told a newspaper that he hoped the "older play will again be presented" in the city since it "has never been allowed to play there since the first season." See "Theatrical," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, December 5, 1908, 5.

federal troops and the demise of Reconstruction. Estimates of African Americans murdered by white extralegal violence range from 3,300 to 10,000 during and following Reconstruction, and it is little wonder that Mark Twain called the country the "United States of Lyncherdom" in 1901.[157] It is remarkable that just a decade after the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson*—with all the established measures to ensure social and political inequality, and even while sitting in segregated playhouses – that the phantom of lost white juridical superiority could inspire such virulent reactions in a society that so clearly enshrined, valued, and protected whiteness.

Eventually Dixon – like MacKaye and Haworth before him – needed some kind of explanation as to what *happened* to his beloved Klan. The Reconstruction Klan, founded by disgruntled former rebels in Pulaski, Tennessee, was the subject of federal scrutiny and legislation by the early 1870s, as President Grant and Congress passed a series of acts to dismantle the Klan specifically.[158] As members were tried during the South Carolina Ku Klux Klan trials of 1871 and blacks stepped forward to accuse the white men who had tortured them, the Klan's membership and sway declined precipitously. It was not until the 1920s that the Klan was resuscitated and had expanded to a level that the Pulaski founders would have most likely found unimaginable. Dixon wrote of the Klan's demise in *The Traitor* and worked with playwright Channing Pollack to dramatize this novel. Here, the Klan diverges from the untainted, heroic organization Dixon portrayed in *The Clansman*.

The play begins a year after the South Carolina trials. In the North Carolina home of Judge Butler, the loyal black servant Maggie cleans the interior. She gets a thorn from a decorative garland stuck in her hair and falls from a ladder in a panic: the entering Mammie character assures her that "de Ku Kluxes" were not after Maggie, and are not coming after her at

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[157] See Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.
[158] See Mark Weiner, *Black Trials: Citizenship from the Beginnings of Slavery to the End of Caste* (Westminster, MD: Knopf, 2004), 197-213.

the house.[159] Maggie's terror is mostly due to the fact that Stella Butler – recently returned from her D.C. education – has invited the local Klan members to a costume party in her home while her father, a Republican judge, is supposed to be out of town. Stella finds the Klan mysterious and romantic, and organized the party at the urging of her fiancé Steve Hoyle, who unbeknownst to her is a Klan member himself. As they prepare for the party the two black characters, played by white actresses in blackface, already offer a vastly different portrait of race relations from the opening scene of *The Clansman*. They work loyally and in accordance with the gender and race relations of Dixon's universe in the home of the white master, with a healthy respect for the white supremacy exhibited by their employers and their guests. John Graham, the hero, was a lawyer and the prior occupant of the Judge's house, but he lost his home and his practice due to the Republican judge's dislike of ex-Confederates. Graham tells a prior Klan ally that he disbanded the group, after growing concerned over the same ignoble constituents joining the Klan that MacKaye's heroes bemoaned. Graham says the Klan's "business was not personal vengeance – its sole purpose was to save the South from negro rule."[160] Believing the group achieved this purpose, Graham declared that the "dangerous work is done…they've saved the State," and as the federal government is preparing to sweep in he felt the need to dismantle the group so as to "not risk the lives of our men another day."[161] Hoyle has recently revived the group and installed himself as the leader of these now-red hooded vigilantes. Graham says that Hoyle has "reorganized its rowdy elements" to create a group unrecognizable to Graham, and the hero tells Hoyle upon their first meeting that he disapproves of the "raid" on the (otherwise unidentified) "old Jew" Hoyle recently ordered.[162] As much as Graham dislikes Judge Butler – who is part of the federal force seeking to snuff out the Klan – Graham of course falls in love with the judge's daughter Stella at first sight. The judge unexpectedly returns home early, and in

[159] Thomas Dixon, Jr., and Channing Pollock, *The Traitor* (unpublished typescript). c. 1908. Performing Arts Research Collections, New York: New York Public Library, act I, 2.
[160] Dixon and Pollock, *Traitor*, act I, 11.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid., act II, 13.

front of her father and her fiancé Hoyle, Stella invites Graham to the party that evening. Hoyle, clearly jealous, diverges from his earlier support of the soiree and now echoes her father's requests to cancel the party. Steve orders her to stop the event and expresses his hatred of John Graham, and a furious Stella gives him back the engagement ring declaring that she is "not yet ready to take orders from my master."[163] The headstrong Stella assures her concerned father that they are only "a crowd of rollicking boys," and though he knows that is not the case the judge acquiesces to his child.[164]

As a happy Stella attends to her plans, Judge Butler meets with a contender for an open Senate seat. The competition, Larkin, is a Northern convict who created a new identity in the South and wants to hold office. The judge tells Larkin that he intends to blackmail the ex-convict, saying he'll keep Larkin's past a secret if Larkin swears to run the judge's campaign for Senate instead. Larkin agrees, but enlists the help of an ignorant black servant and murders the judge during the party, as Klan members mingle in full regalia disguised from other attendees. Hoyle sees an opportunity to dispose of his rival Graham, and urges Stella that the Klan chief must be the culprit. Stella seeks out the mystery man's identity, and agrees to work with the federal government to avenge her father. Growing to believe the former chief, Graham, is still in charge of the Klan, she forces him to admit his involvement with the group. Because Graham does not make it clear that he was in charge of the Klan in its prior manifestation only, Stella believes him guilty and asks if he will return to her in his robes to indulge a "romantic fancy" of hers.[165] In reality, she has federal agents waiting offstage to arrest him when he arrives in his regalia. However, the agents inform Stella that her information can only be used to bring down the Klan, but there is not enough evidence to convict Graham for her father's murder. Stella is enraged, not caring about what happens to the Klan at all; she is only concerned with finding her father's killer. When Graham returns in his robes, claiming he had no part in her father's

[163] Ibid., act II, 24.
[164] Ibid., act II, 23.
[165] Ibid., act III, 30.

demise, Stella realizes she is in love with Graham – but her requests that he flee come too late, and Graham is taken into custody. During the trial the falseness of the new Klan is exposed, and the loyalty and nobility of the old revealed; Larkin is arrested and convicted, Steve inherits Judge Butler's position but not Stella's heart, and Graham is freed. Stella has taken it upon herself to procure a pardon for Graham, and President Grant's note is read to the court:

> I have just issued a proclamation of general amnesty for all offenders under the Ku Klux Conspiracy Act. My wife is a Southern woman. Give my love to her people – they are mine! I wish for the South only peace and happiness.[166]

When Grant's words were read at the Norfolk premiere, a mountaineer Klansman gave a "rebel yell and called for cheers for President Grant," and the characters onstage and the audience joined in.[167]

Like *The Clansman* before it, *The Traitor* also premiered in Norfolk and was directed by George Brennan, the producer of *The Clansman*. Brennan used his connections to approach David Belasco about using one of the young actresses he was grooming, Catherine Tower, to perform the role of Stella: clearly the production team believed they had another hit in the works.[168] After the 1908 premiere, the agents of Klaw and Erlanger had again fixed the booking of the show, slated to tour the South before heading up to New York. A critic who had yet to see the production, writing for a Mississippi paper, was full of unbridled enthusiasm and (questionable) information about the show's commercial promise, saying that four touring companies of the play were being organized to cater to early demand.[169] That forecast for demand – whether planted by the press representative for the show Howard Herrick or not –

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[166] Ibid., act IV, 23.
[167] "'The Traitor' Received Great Demonstration," *Augusta Chronicle*, September 29, 1908, 3.
[168] Belasco "reluctantly consented" to release the eighteen year-old Tower from her contractual obligations for the tour. "Dixon Play is Coming Here," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 7, 1909, 10.
[169] "Theatrical 'The Traitor' In New Orleans," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, October 23, 1908, 4. The paper also gave the pricing for the New Orleans appearance, since the Tulane Theatre was accepting mail orders in anticipation of the popular play. You could see the 1908 "sequel" for anywhere from 25 cents to $1.50 in the evenings.

proved inaccurate, as the production was not nearly as successful as *The Clansman*.[170] After it "failed to make a hit in New Orleans," *The Traitor* was still mentioned in the advertisements of Southern theatres in the 1908/09 season, but claims that it would be as or more popular than *Clansman* and other such boasts circulated in advance by Syndicate agents dwindled.[171] At least one theatre in Georgia – perhaps fearing racial turmoil like the incidents linked to *The Clansman* a few years earlier or maybe out of sheer prejudice – decided that tickets would only be sold to white audience members when the production came to town.[172] The inflammatory racism of *The Clansman* was greatly subdued in *The Traitor,* and one reviewer noticed that "the negro problem itself is handled with much skill and lacks the extreme bitterness of the earlier play."[173] Another posited that the lack of potential amalgamation changed the nature of this play from its predecessor, and that "there is not quite so much appeal to the passions and prejudices of the southern people found in the lines and action of 'The Traitor' as there is in the 'The Clansman.'"[174] As with other appearances of the KKK on stage, one paper writer declared that "the Ku Klux Klan is probably the most picturesque element ever shown in an American play."[175] In addition to this "picturesque" scene of the Klan, the reviewer believed that it was "hardly necessary to add that the love story of the play is charming, for any love story laid in the Sunny South must be the perfection of love-making."[176] The powerful Klan of *The Clansman* is here relegated to being merely "picturesque," adding another layer to a romanticized Southern past and melodramatic love-making. Set squarely in the turbulent Reconstruction era and considered a relic, the purpose and true nature of the Klan is veiled in the shrouds of romanticized masculinity. The ongoing myth of the noble and aristocratic Klan being usurped by morally

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[170] Herrick was also the representative for *The Clansman*, and had done press work for the Shubert organization. See "Theatrical," *Biloxi Daily Herald*.
[171] "At the Theatre," *State*, Columbia, SC, November 1, 1908, 5. I found no evidence that the production appeared beyond this season, and none that it made it to Northern stages either.
[172] "Negroes Not to See 'The Traitor' Played," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, November 7, 1908, 6.
[173] "'The Traitor,'" *Augusta Chronicle*.
[174] "Thomas Dixon's 'The Traitor' Given a Cordial Reception," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, December 1, 1908, 4.
[175] "Thomas Dixon, Jr. New Southern Play," *Augusta Chronicle*, July 14, 1908, 10.
[176] Ibid.

questionable (read: lower-class) white men that is visited or hinted at in *all* these sites of memories that included the KKK are patently and historically false. Even though the Klan was a "highly decentralized body," as Lisa Cardyn argues, it is "not the case, as many sympathizers than and later would have it, that the worst outrages were perpetrated by isolated renegades who somehow managed to thwart the irreproachable aims of the genuine article."[177] While exploring the history of sexualized racial violence in the South and the various post-war white supremacist groups, Cardyn sees the "abiding hostility to the notion of 'social equality'" as one of the foundational tenets of the Klan.[178]

The "abiding hostility to the notion of 'social equality'" exercises its power throughout these sites of Civil War memories that incorporate the Klan. Repeatedly, the Klan is absolved from its racially-based agenda: no hero renounces the validity of ensuring white dominance, though he might deplore its means when the violence is perpetrated by less honorable white men. A dystopian black rule is only directly portrayed in *The Clansman* and is quickly dispatched within the rules of melodrama. The spaces of innocence are neatly characterized in this particular Klan strain of the vision: Dixon seems to yearn for white vengeance, but ultimately seeks white domination, while the dramaturgical structure of the prior plays uses the Klan as yet another element to achieve the intersectional romance. The upper-class men that started the Klan in these sites of memories are part of the chivalrous planter elite, a dying breed in the Progressive Era. Remarking upon W.E. Sterling's postwar melodrama *On the Suwanee River* (1895), one New Jersey reporter eulogized the Southern characters as "the chivalrous class, who are rapidly passing away with the advance of the more energetic people of the north and the newer blood of the south."[179] The same post-war "chivalrous class" composed the original white caps in the above productions, and the staged sites of white supremacist memories including the Ku Klux Klan likewise mourn the supposed passing of the planter elite.

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[177] Cardyn, "Sexualized Racism/Gendered Violence," 684.
[178] Ibid., 692-3.
[179] "State Street Offers Two Good Plays," *Trenton Sunday Advertiser*, January 29, 1905, 11.

The myth of the supplanted elites allowed an ennobled and justifiable white supremacy to live on in popular imagination. The Klan on stage was simply an extension of the romanticized, victimized, and ravaged landscape that appeared in all the other embodied sites of Civil War memories set in the post-war South.

Re-envisioning the South and Whiteness

It seemed the world had irrevocably changed, or at least the world in the United States: a civil war, the closing of the West, the ending of slavery, waves of immigrants from faraway lands and different languages, railroads and innumerable technological advances that changed the warp and weft of everyday life. As the Southern way of life was considered lost, embodied sites of war memories responded to and dramaturgically forced these novelties into melodramatic molds and formulas in an attempt to reconcile what seemed to be a quickly-changing America. Plays set in post-war Dixie used war memories that could that could assuage the fears of the dominant culture, ensuring that white, procreative, male-dominated prewar hierarchies were maintained, and that the blame for the war was neatly forgiven and forgotten. The performed sites of memories that fall within the elastic boundaries of the white supremacist visions of the war explored in this chapter represent the South as the US, writ large. While mourning for the ravaged landscape of the Confederate South, the characters and, in the larger picture, the nation yearn for a lost pastoral space of hierarchical and agrarian innocence, rapidly disappearing in the eyes of turn of the century spectators.

The visions projected onto and embodied as sites of white supremacist performance allowed the dominant white audiences to confront the implications of a fully equal democracy and, in turn, reject it in favor of constructed hierarchies.[180] It is worth remembering that white

[180] There were, presumably, some occasions when black audience members would have also viewed these productions – particularly in some of the Southern theatres, where blacks were locally a higher percent of the population but were often relegated to the gallery. This was the case certainly at the Norfolk, Virginia premiere in 1905 of *The Clansman*. It is unclear how many of these theatres – both in New York and on the touring circuits – allowed black audience members, or to what extent African Americans attended

audience members did not necessarily attend theatre with the articulated and verbalized need to see shows that protected, reified, and affirmed whiteness (and particularly white masculinity) as the highest pinnacle of juridical and social status. As is often the case, audience composition and desires can never be reconstituted or ascertained with complete accuracy. The mere fact that these productions were staged, and toured for years with fiscal gain to their producers, suggests that the narratives of war, gender, race, and ethnicity that were worked into these white supremacist visions did serve an important social and cultural function for the predominantly white, middle/upper-class audiences that attended. Measures to establish the exclusion of Others – literacy tests for voting and citizenship, heavy taxes on immigrants, strict deportation laws, and lengthy court battles attempting to determine who was "white" or not – dominated the Gilded Age and Progressive legal scene. Anti-miscegenation laws – even those from the antebellum era – remained on the books in nearly every state until the Civil Rights movement, with states continuing to pass such laws well into the twentieth century.[181] With *Plessy v. Ferguson*, segregation became the de facto law of the land (particularly in the South), and exclusionary practices that buttressed the value of "whiteness" socially and culturally were the norm. In the continuing maintenance of racial borders and citizenship (however constructed and suspect) and the pseudo-inclusion of these black characters that implicitly accepted second-class citizens status, white supremacist ideologues could rest assured that – in keeping with the language of *Plessy v. Ferguson* – all notions of inferiority and real injustice were indeed perceived rather than real.

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these productions: as discussed in the prior chapter, there were theatres and troupes catering specifically to black audiences at the turn of the century. In fact, other than in regard to *The Clansman,* little or no mention is made about black audience members in the various productions here. Again, the evidence is slim on this front, and barring the discovery of further materials, it must be assumed that the Syndicate and touring stock companies were mostly interested in the opinion and endorsement of the dominant white audiences for "legitimate" melodramas or spectacles.

[181] Werner Sollors declares that the anti-miscegenation laws "began to function as the ultimate sanction of the American system of white supremacy" after the Civil War: he underlines the ubiquity of such laws, pointing out that "at one time or another, 41 American colonies and states enacted them." See Werner Sollors, *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 183.

Since these productions were devised and staged after the demise of Reconstruction, the threat of what *could have been* permitted audiences to, in the most bleak scenarios, catch a glimpse of the potential "darkest hour" of Reconstruction and simultaneously feel relief that it was not meant to be. White heroes repeatedly intervened and staved off impending doom – whether in the form of financial ruin, miscegenation, the besmirching of white female honor, divisive sectionalist politics, black government take-over, or some combination thereof. It is the same complexity of emotions that surrounded the images of Southern ruins. The postwar South was a fantastical palimpsest, with mythical promises and aggrandized racial horrors lingering amongst the melodrama and magnolias. The promise of white fraternity, tucked into the rural Southern mountains or lingering in the ruins of plantation houses, was the power of the white supremacist vision and its performed sites of memories – and its ultimate instability. Such a place could no longer be found, and such a time could not be recaptured: it was a racially stratified, preindustrial, chivalric space of innocence that could never be achieved again. The South, like the rest of the country, had fallen victim to the terrifying specter of progress. There was nothing "simple" about the Gilded Age or Progressive Era, but the perceived simplicity of the post-war Southern landscape, its racial algorithms, and the neatly disposed-of conflicts under the auspices of genre and melodramatic conventions proved powerful and enduring when juxtaposed with the tumultuous chaos of mass social and economic change.

Conclusion:

Visions & Sites of Civil War Memories on Stage

In the beginning of this dissertation, I proposed that a full-length study of the investments in sites of Civil War memories on stage would reveal the instability within the concepts of nation and citizenship – even as these sites of war memories claimed to stage a reunited, free nation. I began by clustering together the Unionist allegorical pageant/melodramas of the amateur Grand Army of the Republic and the commercial war-time dramas. Both the amateur and commercial sites shared war-time settings and presented gendered, racial, and ethnic Others as being unfit for equal citizenship in the reunited nation. The reunion of white men and the regeneration of the Anglo-Saxon population was the privileged narrative in these sites, seeking a reconciliation that supposedly would return the country to a prewar space of innocence. Audiences consumed and generated a market for these reconciliationist narratives that drew upon ethnic humor and minimized the role of slavery as a cause of the war: there were an immense number of amateur plays were published and performed by/for the GAR, and many commercial plays enjoyed tours for multiple seasons. Producers and performers catered to and created a market for romantic reconciliationist narratives: sectionalist loyalties were staged by amateur players associated with local GAR posts, while the commercial dramas traded on intersectional romances. Both the amateur and commercial sites touted that the transgressions of the war had to be dispensed of to allow the regeneration of the white nation.

I next examined the sites generated by black performers. This was a different task entirely, considering the lack of archival sources due to the inherent privileging of whiteness and textually-based performance. I contended that black performances of war memories were linked to plantation spectacles and minstrelsy: the renderings of slavery by freed black bodies were coded performances celebrating emancipation. By gathering wages while portraying enslaved

peoples, black producers and performers were troubling the recreation of "authentic, happy slaves" that filled out constructed Southern spaces on stage. The performances referencing slavery varied widely content-wise and in their ability to play to a national audience: in contrast to the plantation spectacles and minstrel shows, more overtly political plays like Henrietta Vinton Davis and John Edward Bruce's *Our Old Kentucky Home* or the Hyers Sisters' *Out of Bondage* were only consumed by Northern and Western audiences. A variety of productions drew on emancipationist narratives were staged by/for the black community, though most of those scripts are lost – such as Charles Sager's *The Negro*, or *Marcus, a Story of the South*. The plantation spectacles and minstrel shows that toured the nation and catered to dominant white audiences resorted to more coded commentaries on the purpose of the war and the realities of slavery, very often under the guise of patriotism or by presenting a new range of skills and techniques that were decidedly not bound to the plantation – creating new genres and performance opportunities for black performers, at a time when jobs and social mobility were limited. The debates within the larger black community over how (and if) to remember slavery combined with the loss of equal rights in the wake of the second civil war and (eventually) *Plessy v. Ferguson* resulted in the need for alternative spaces of professionalization and identity construction.

In the final cluster, I juxtaposed memories drawing upon the landscape of the postwar South and the sentimentalization of the "dying" planter class with the Lost Cause narrative. The moonlight and magnolias of the plantation served a palliative function against the backdrop of an industrializing and rapidly changing nation, idealizing the agrarian past and Southern racial hierarchies by presenting the Southern whites as victims. The more extreme sites included the Ku Klux Klan, playing out the romanticized fantasy of white supremacist ideology and valorizing the "original" Klan as chivalrous Southern gentlemen. The sites of memories included in this study presented an array of mental conceptions, which were then consumed by audiences. In the consumption of restrictive models of citizenship and largely white-washed manifestations of the

war, audiences and producers participated in a theatrical market that corroborated juridical moves to limit political equality.

The Ku Klux Klan from *The Clansman*, cast as heroes by playwright Thomas Dixon, Jr., as a counter-narrative to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, were the leading men in the first movie ever screened at the White House. Though President Woodrow Wilson's supposed statement after the 1915 screening – that it was "like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true" – has since been proven apocryphal, the thousands of men who joined the resurging KKK in the 1910s and 20s clearly did believe that this was a "terribly true" rendering of the Civil War's aftermath.[1] The initial run of *Birth of a Nation* was not without incident or protest, but the movie has also been linked to this growth in Klan membership; contrary to the decline that Thomas Dixon lamented in *The Traitor* and Steele MacKaye portrayed in *The Fool's Errand*, the Klan lived on, ushering in a new era of Lost Cause sympathy linked to race terror.

A few months after the White House screening, the country celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. President Woodrow Wilson visited the battlefields during the commemorative events on July 4th, speaking to over 50,000 veterans from both armies assembled there. He reflected upon the reunion of these men: "enemies no longer…the quarrel forgotten – except that we shall not forget the splendid valor, the manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another, now grasping hands and smiling into each other's eyes."[2] It is almost romantic, this joining of hands and smiling into eyes; it was, as Stuart McConnell claimed, a "love feast of reconciliation."[3]

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[1] Melvyn Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation": A History of "The Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111.
[2] Woodrow Wilson, "Address at Gettysburg," in *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President*, edited by Mario R. Dinunzio (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 370.
[3] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900*(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 190.

David Blight begins *Race and Reunion* with President Wilson's visit to the "sacred ground" of Gettysburg.[4] Blight's work has been deeply influential in the field of Civil War memory studies and certainly was integral to this dissertation. There have been detractors, however, to Blight's assertion that the reconciliationist and white supremacist visions entirely dominated the strains of memory throughout the fifty years after the war. In her recent book, Caroline Janney offers some contradictions to the narrative of white "love feast[s] of reconciliation." She begins by declaring that Blue-Gray reunions were "the exception, not the rule," and distinguishes between reunion and reconciliation – reunion being the "political reunification of the nation," but reconciliation "was not necessary for reunion."[5] Arguing that reconciliation took on very different forms, she goes on to state that "even when former foes came together in the name of reconciliation, most were not compelled to do so because of shared ideas about white supremacy or a tacit willingness to forget slavery on the part of Union veterans."[6] In fact, Janney declares unequivocally that "Union soldiers did not 'sell out' to Confederate memories," suggesting that the prominence the Lost Cause is given in scholarly considerations of Civil War memories is somewhat misplaced.[7] She goes on throughout the book to chronicle the many instances when sectionalist loyalties butted heads during war commemoration processes, such as GAR posts that admitted blacks and instances where slavery was thrust to the fore by white Union veterans. The "whitewashed memory of the war and vision of sectional healing on Confederate terms" proposed by scholars of post-war popular culture did

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[4] Edward Tabor Linenthal called Gettysburg – along with land of other seminal American battles (Lexington & Concord, Little Bighorn, etc.) – "sacred patriotic space," or "pilgrimage sites," where "memories of the transformative power of war and the sacrificial heroism of the warrior are preserved," and those who visit "seek environmental intimacy in order to experience patriotic inspiration." See Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 3.
[5] Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 3-6.
[6] Ibid., 7.
[7] Ibid., 9.

not, she argues, apply as well to veterans – and thus we need to reconsider the narrative of "whitewashed memory" that characterizes the current historiography of Civil War memories.[8]

Janney is not the only one seeking to correct the arguments posed by David Blight and others – Andre Fleche has likewise argued against the collapse of the reunion/reconciliationist narrative by historians. In an article on Union veterans and war memories, Fleche argues that it is a "less-well-known fact that the memories of many black and white Union veterans presented a remarkably unified and fully visible challenge to any view of the war that ignored the role black soldiers played in preserving the nation."[9] He goes on to list the many and varied situations in which white Union veterans advocated for black monuments, wrote praise-filled pieces on the bravery of black soldiers, and held interracial reunions.

It is clear that some veterans on both sides remained fully committed to their political causes, refusing to embrace reconciliation. This is not only the case with veterans – Southern women touted the Lost Cause narrative, and countless people even 150 years after the fighting harbor sectional loyalties. One need only read about recent debates over the Confederate flag in the South to realize the symbols and ideology of reunion and reconciliation are still contentious issues. If there are such instances of deviation from these visions, are they even useful? Why should we attempt to classify or categorize memory at all? And how will the use of typologies with memories – such as the framework suggested by David Blight – aid in the analysis of theatrical performances? Should we even deploy visions such as these, when they could lead to generalizations or – even more problematic– force us literally to categorically dispose of nuances, subtleties, or non-corroborating evidence?

Why Visions?

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[8] Ibid., 161.
[9] Andre Fleche, "'Shoulder to Shoulder as Comrades Tried': Black and White Union Veterans and Civil War Memory, *Civil War History* 51, no. 2 (June 2005): 178.

It is worthwhile to consider the limits (as mentioned above via Janney and Fleche) and uses of Blight's memory typologies – as one should do with any imposition of categories. I was not attempting to force these productions into particular molds of memories, and in fact we can see the very real departures from Blight's visions in the chapter clusters. The work being done in plantation spectacles, for instance, does not adhere to the emancipationist vision in its most aggressive, Du Boisian sense – even if black performers and producers were carving out small spaces for advancement and identity within these performances. *Black America* is certainly not *Star of Ethiopia* in its overt politics or content, but performers like Billy McClain created employment opportunities for the community and allowed them to capitalize on and play with stereotypical images of slavery. In contrast, Henrietta Vinton Davis and John Bruce's *Our Old Kentucky Home* presented slavery by drawing on models from the abolitionist movement, detailing the peculiar institution's cruel practices and elevating the role of black men and women in the fight for emancipation. By marking the moments of contradiction or adherence to particular interpretations of war memories, the range and spectrum within such categories reveals both their utility as organizing principles and the vagueness of such categories.

My use of Blight's framework is primarily because there has to be *some* way to assess memories. Memory is a fickle thing, and there was clearly a wide range within these visions: and these visions, as I understood them, were not conceived of as concrete, rigidly defined structures. It is this very pliability that makes such frameworks both helpful and simultaneously limiting – they are lines on which to hang things, but not totalizing structures. For instance: as just stated above, *Our Old Kentucky Home* was clearly a deviation (however limited its reach and consumption) from the planation spectacles of its time, yet because it was another site of memories about slavery performed by black Americans it is placed within the same general field for comparison. When doing so, we get a sense of the struggles within the black community itself to generate memories of the war for the community itself and for larger, white-dominated commercial markets. There needs to be some way of trying to wrangle the messiness of

memories: some way to establish a mode of comparison and to get a sense of the memories that were being offered up for consumption by postwar audiences who may or may not have lived through the war themselves.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, the idea of approaching war memories in a holistic manner was mentioned. By conducting a "holistic" analysis, the competing and complicit sites within a field of memories can be revealed. Clearly, the use of this categorization means that some of the simultaneity afforded by a chronological study is lost: during the summer of 1895, audiences could walk through the mock-plantation and cotton fields transplanted into a Brooklyn park for *Black America*; in October, Belasco's *The Heart of Maryland* thrilled spectators at the Herald Square Theatre with its Southern heroine (played by the infamous Leslie Carter) climbing a belfry to save her lover; audiences demanded that the 4th Regiment of the Baltimore National Guard execute their drills again during a production of *In the Enemy's Camp* in June of that year; that fall in Baltimore, a Southern super disgruntled by the disparaging portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan in *On the Mississippi* was supposedly threatening playwright and actor William Haworth. Different narratives, politics, nuances, spectators, venues, precedents, and antecedents in these three productions: but all of these were offered under the guise of popular entertainment staging the Civil War's causes, meaning, and effects.

Much of the "blurring" in the visions of war memories is rooted in the inability to fix slippery subjects like race, or citizenship, or history itself. In her theatrical viewing life, a spectator might have applauded William Gillette after he darted about a telegraph room as a spy in *Secret Service*, or enjoyed the escape and rise to a legislative position by the hero of *Peculiar Sam*. This same viewer might have taken in veterans portraying heroes and a vengeful and murderous Confederate villain in *The Drummer Boy*, or watched as the KKK burst in to save the heroine from a mulatto would-be rapist; this person would have consumed a wide variety of Civil War memories. She might have, like Laura Cooke, slept through political diatribes, or gone only for the music, or the love scenes, or the spectacle, or the live horses, or the fact that a

cousin, who was a veteran, appeared in the show. So why are these sites of memories important, if the viewing of them could have been such an arbitrary matter? What can these productions reveal beyond the work done by prior scholars, and when situated holistically within a wide field of memories and Civil War visions?

Producing & Consuming: History and the Nation-State

Clarifying how these agents of memories in theatre – the producers, performers, writers, and spectators – then participated in, rejected, or troubled the narrative of the love feast was, in many ways, the aim of this study. With the popularity of theatre and the participation in performance culture by a range of classes seeking leisure outlets, producers and performers often catered to possible audiences on the national touring circuit(s). Even amateur producers and publishers sought to capitalize on the post-war incorporation of America: publishing houses printed large numbers of GAR scripts and included detailed performance instructions, while several playwrights and professional actors traveled the country acting as directors for GAR stagings. After the war, there was an increasingly nationalized circuit of theatre culture due to the Syndicate and other monopolizing ventures – especially towards the 1890s, when the South's rebuilding of infrastructure created the spaces and circuits for touring. By creating war memories that would appeal to a national market, the work of hegemony was complicit with the capitalist market of theatrical production.

In theatre, as with so many other cultural forms and memories, the lines that demarcate inclusion and exclusion within categories are sometimes sloppy. But these categories remain useful for assessing how theatre may have contributed to or defied attempts by various producers of culture to (wittingly or not) establish and further political agendas. Popular culture in the form of theatrical production and consumption does, for the most part, seem to argue for racial capitulation. Janney is right that "Union veterans did not 'sell out' to Confederate memories" – the continued performance of Union cause-based GAR dramas into the twentieth

century is evidence of this fact. And there are many other instances of producers, performers, and audiences not "selling out" to white supremacist memories. However, the theatre-going populace did indeed sell out in many respects: even with all the variations and gradations of the politics of memories presented on the US stage, the overwhelming dominance of white-oriented, reconciliationst narratives is substantiated by the sheer number and long runs of many of the productions detailed throughout this study.

An audience member who went to see Dixon's *The Clansman* could have been completely opposed to the Ku Klux Klan, but attended for the spectacle, or to see what was causing such a ruckus. Most audience members would probably not have spotted the Lost Cause agendas embedded in the postwar Southern landscapes romanticized on stages, as in *On the Mississippi* or *At Piney Ridge*. Blight's typologies remain a useful structure to hang ideas off of and illuminate commonalities and contradictions, and by deploying such visions one can argue how an audience member could *read* pity for destitute Southern postwar belles and the overall sentimentalization of the Southern victims in these plays and thus be partaking of the white supremacist agenda, without actually joining the Klan.

Race, ethnicity, and gender were constantly undergoing construction as well, suggesting that their relationship to equality and citizenship could shift to serve hegemonic and dominant whims. The role of women – potentially furthered by their involvement in the war – was diminished to that of political pawns or love-sick heroines who would forsake their professed national and familial loyalties for the sake of romance. Black soldiers and other minorities who at times served in the war presented comic relief or otherwise reinforced the superiority of the white soldier. On stage, the white man wins every time – even when the Confederates lose the war. Though black performers might have removed whites entirely from the stage – even whiting up to portray slave owners – the popular offerings for black performance were always contingent upon the racial edicts and expectations of dominant white audiences. *Our Old Kentucky Home* could not have toured in the major mixed race houses of the South without

significant repercussions. Neither could Sager's *The Negro*. Plantation spectacles, however, that mostly showed happy black dancers and slaves – even if there were allusions to emancipation – were acceptable.

This is why locally generated sites of memories were perhaps the most likely to contradict the dominant war visions: amateur plays put on by GAR posts in the North contained strong pro-Union sentiments, and local African American theatres – by and for the black community – could deal more directly with slavery and its legacy. Outside the demands of the commercial market, amateur and local groups could create counter-narratives that flew in the face of Lost Cause and Confederate capitulation. Because the content of these productions and the extent or their consumption is largely lost, there is no way of knowing how much these sites impacted audience members and performers. We do know that when the intersectional commercial dramas in the vein of Gillette, Howard, and Belasco premiered, many heralded them as restorative balms on stage, needed to assuage any lingering political angst. Even if sectionalist tensions remained and counter-narratives were in the air, the popularity and tenacity of commercial reconciliationist dramas cannot be denied.

The workings of melodrama, commercial theatre, and narratives of reconciliation posited in these productions endorses the existence of a "tacit willingness" to embrace war memories on Southern terms, contrary to Janney's assertions. The safest theatre – the production that might most ensure an audience's approval in all regions – was theatre that proposed a reconciliationist rather than reunion narrative. Moreover, the pageants and spectacles – the melodramatic allegorical workings of the GAR, for instance, or the plantation spectacles, or even Charles Sager's *The Negro* – as well as the melodramas that served as sites of Civil War memories looked both backwards and forward, Janus-like. The return to home, and to a restored nation, is the dominant theme here: whether that "home" and space of innocence is a white fraternal nation with clear racial and gender hierarchies, or the southern plantation now owned and operated by freed slaves. The mostly coded emancipationist narratives of black producers and

performers could not blatantly overthrow white supremacist regimes developing throughout the country, but instead smuggled in references and leveraged the expectations of white audiences to define new professional and personal opportunities.

In the more extreme cases of overt political renderings of the war, such as the bloody shirt rhetoric in the GAR plays, I have argued that these productions did still yearn for – and established by dramaturgical necessity – a space of innocence that was based on intersectional, white reconciliation rather than the more austere reunion proposed by Janney. In the world of popular entertainment – always seeking a resolution, more often than not based upon a premise of a future that is created by the procreative moves of white intersectional lovers in heterosexual relationships – the reunion and reconciliation narrative collapse; there is ultimately no reason to distinguish between the two when discussing sites of memories on stage.

Of course, the sites of war memories *all* catered to nostalgia. There is an overwhelming amount of nostalgia embedded in these sites of memories: for the cotton fields, for the idyllic village prior to the war, for the crumbling plantation, for the "disappearing" planter class, for the slave cabin, for the "simpler" antebellum times, for the German and Irish rather than the "strange" and "more foreign" Eastern and Southern European immigrants washing up on the shores, for the mammies and Uncle Toms, for the fiery Southern belles. By historicizing the antebellum era, the war, and the immediate aftermath, these sites of memories evoked an always-already lost America. The war was a temporal disruption, a violent conflict that rent the nation apart literally, and the instability of nations – written up and destroyed with the flick of a pen on paper – became clear. Nostalgia, by definition, suggests that things were better "before." The prominence of homes – Southern plantations (before or after the war), the cabins and humble abodes of Southern spaces or in idyllic New England villages, the new homes in the North enjoyed by free black families – all suggest that the war is ultimately relates to the domestic experience. Even the military allegories almost always return home: the domesticity of these plays, the desire to return to homes (lost or still standing), is a way of imprinting a

domestic nostalgia on all these sites of memories. The spaces of innocence are, in the sites of Civil War memories, always sites of nostalgia as well. They can never be fully restored in the case of Civil War memories: plantation homes and Southern estates will crumble, old slave cabins will become artifacts, and the quaint New England homes are missing family members. Nostalgia also suggests that the way things were, however many issues there might have been, is somehow superior to the current state of affairs. This is clearly a distorted vision of the past, but many suffered from it: the GAR heroes dream of a nation that can never be characterized as inviolable again, the Confederate sweethearts abandon their familial and geographic loyalties never to return, the heroes of the commercial dramas embrace over the remains of the ruined South, and older generations of slaves pine for their simple cabin homes.

The fragility of nation and citizenship are obstinately removed from these visions, denying the inherent instability in such constructions. Whether the war itself is the obstacle (secession) or a means to an end (abolition), the ultimate reality of the constructedness of nation-states and juridical rights remains peripheral, marginalized by the patriotic fervor of post-war sites of memories. All participants in the sites of memories – Union, reunion, reconciliationist, emancipationist, white supremacist, a blending of various visions thereof – laid claim to patriotism and celebrated its triumph, all the while failing to acknowledge that nations and rights are broken and written into being by human agents. The divine providence of the American project and the ideological foundations of citizenship and the nation are undermined by the war, but the fervent declarations of a reunited nation and the chants of "one country" permeating every site of Civil War memories obfuscates this reality. Instead, consumers and producers were assured that the war had banished the inequalities of slavery and sectionalist loyalties, and had created a better and stronger nation. The South had been punished for its misdeeds and deserved no further retribution: the mourned lost homes of the planter class and the slaves alike in the worlds of these plays testified to this fact. The most

popular sites of memories pretended that the inequalities and conflicts that came to a head in the war had been addressed and were no longer a part of post-war political and social life.

The Civil War's popularity as a setting and plot device in commercial entertainment did not cease in the years leading up to World War I. However, Civil War plays, plantation spectacles, and Reconstruction era settings on stage would not enjoy the same ubiquity as they had in the 1890s. This is not to say that stage plays of memories ceased all together: Edward Pepl's *The Littlest Rebel* (1911) or Augustus Thomas's *Copperhead* (1918) starring Lionel Barrymore were both hits and were also adapted for film as well.[10] Film versions were made of other sites as well, such as *The Birth of a Nation* derived from *The Clansman* and *The Warrens of Virginia*, among others. Film and television continued to offer regular injections of Civil War memories into popular culture: D.W. Griffith's *Birth of the Nation*, the film adaptation Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, the 1961 TV series *The Americans*, the depiction of the 54th Massachusetts in *Glory*, the epically long *Gettysburg*, Ken Burns's popular PBS series *The Civil War* – the list is substantial, and many scholars have contributed to and elaborated upon this field.

Much work still needs to be done on later theatrical treatments of Civil War memories. Broadway musicals such as *Shenandoah* (1974) and *The Civil War* (1998), or regional and off-Broadway productions like Paula Vogel's *Civil War Christmas* (2008) are a sampling of the possibilities for further study. Equally intriguing are productions that are staged by regional theatres that tie into local historic and tourist attractions. For example, the original bluegrass musical *Stonewall Country* premiered in 1984 at Lexington, Virginia's Lime Kiln Theatre, and regularly played at the outdoor theatre for twenty-five years. The play celebrated the Lost Cause hero and was a staple for tourists visiting the Lexington area to see the many Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson sites at Washington & Lee University and Virginia Military Institute. Visitors could see Jackson's stuffed horse – Little Sorrel – standing loyally by the jacket sporting the

[10] Barrymore also starred in the silent film version, and *The Littlest Rebel* starred Shirley Temple in 1935.

bullet hole that killed his rider at VMI's museum during the day, and see Jackson on stage amidst artillery fire and strumming banjos in the evening. In another recent instance of such local tie-ins, visitors who lingered a few days after the sesquicentennial events in Gettysburg this past July could see *The Road From Appomattox*, produced by the Totem Pole Play House company at the Majestic Theater. The one-act play by Richard Hellesen creates a fictional space for generals Lee and Grant to meet after the surrender and "explores how two great and very different generals ended the war with mercy and the best interests of the country in mind."[11]

Local productions such as these demand more attention, especially when promoted as part of an immersive history experience and staged alongside the commodification of a particular place as a historic tourist attraction. Such work might consider how sites of war memories – ever-shifting, constantly being re-tooled and retro-fitted – serve narrative, fiscal, and political purposes. When sites of memories on stage are consumed as part of a package while visiting a historical site, there are embedded valences of historical "truth" and "authenticity" linked to the production.

Almost immediately after the surrender at Appomattox, the Civil War was being presented to and consumed by theatrical audiences – and continues to be staged today. Each site continues to state or reiterate what the war was supposed to "mean" to its participants and its inheritors. With each staging, visions of the war expand, contract, focus, and grow blurry, as producers, performers, and spectators engage in a never-ending battle to assign meaning to a conflict that threw the very notion of how nations and citizens are made into question.

[11] The play was originally commissioned by and staged at Ford's Theatre in 2009. "*The Road from Appomattox* Live on Stage at the Majestic Theater." *Gettysburg College's Majestic Theater*, accessed July 12, 2013, http://www.gettysburgmajestic.org/calendar/event_detail.dot?inode=3382268.

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