The Politics of Gender in Early American Theater: Revolutionary Dramatists and Theatrical Practices

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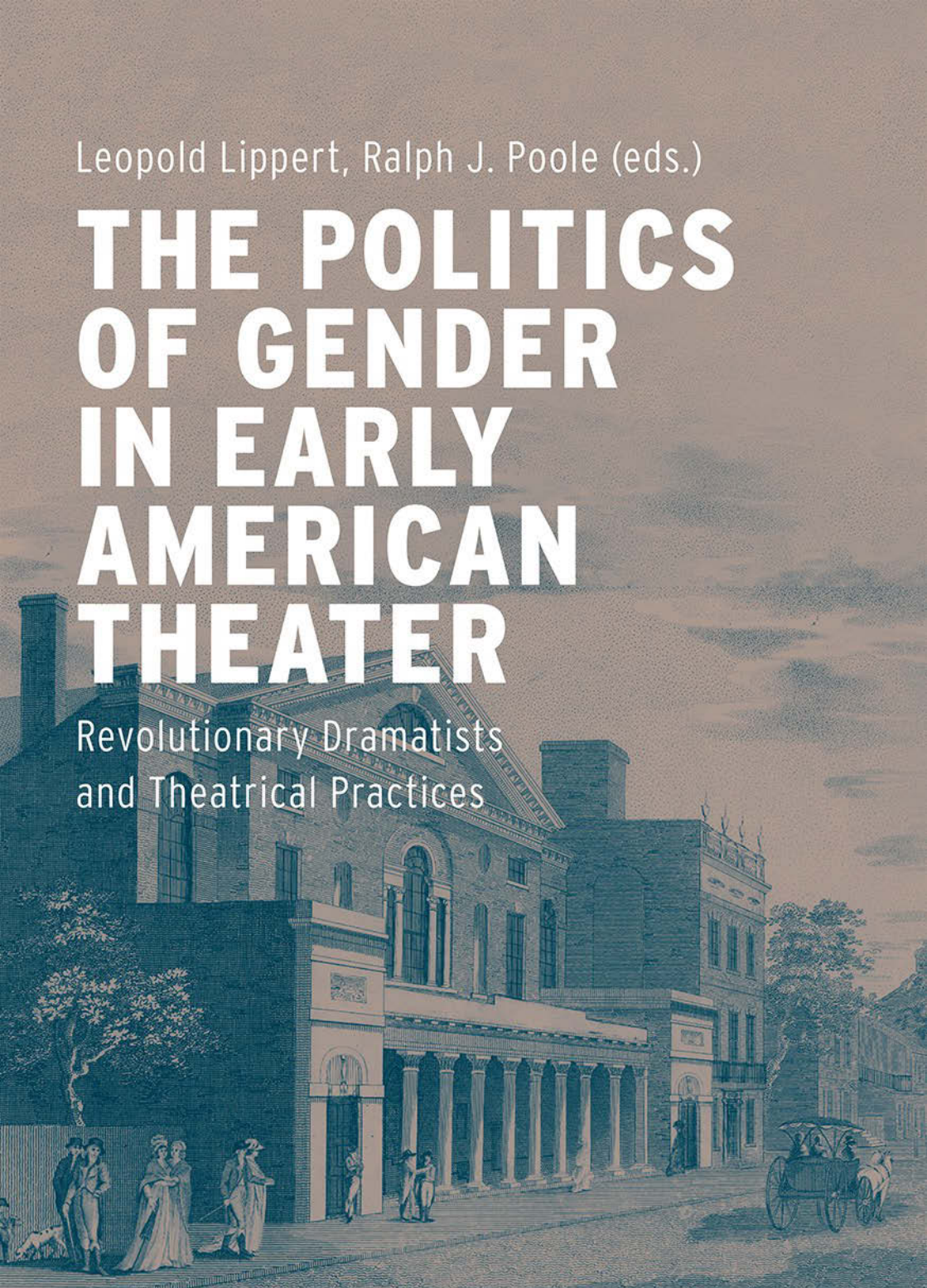

[transcript] American Culture Studies

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American Culture Studies | Volume 31

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This publication was made possible with financial support from the University of Salzburg, the City of Salzburg, and the Stiftungs- und Förderungsgesellschaft der Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg.

The EOSC Future project is co-funded by the European Union Horizon Programme call INFRAEOSC-03-2020, Grant Agreement number 101017536

The free availability of the e-book edition of this publication was financed by the project EOSC Future.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de

First published in 2021 by transcript Verlag, Bielefeld

Cover layout: Maria Arndt, Bielefeld
Cover illustration: "The late theatre in Chesnut [sic] Street Philadelphia [graphic]: Destroyed by Fire in 1820 / Drawn & Published by W. Birch near Bristol, 1804; Gilbert Fox Aquafortus", Library Company of Philadelphia
Printed by Majuskel Medienproduktion GmbH, Wetzlar
Print-ISBN 978-3-8376-5253-6
PDF-ISBN 978-3-8394-5253-0
https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839452530
ISSN of series: 2747-4372
eISSN of series: 2747-4380

Printed on permanent acid-free text paper.

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Introduction
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Leopold Lippert and Ralph J. Poole

The Relevance of Gender for Studying Early American Theater

The study of early American theater has garnered an increased interest in the last years. Looking into how the stage helped to foster (or rebuke) republican fervor, how American dramatists gradually moved from emulating British drama towards "Americanizing" theatrical content and form, how the aesthetics of dramas interlinked with colonial politics, and how the public theatrical sphere gained momentum for discussing matters of national urgency, scholars have recognized the centrality of theater and dramatic form to the cultural politics of the revolutionary and early national periods in particular. Given this refreshing boost of interest, it is surprising that there has been so little attention spared for gender issues. While numerous articles and book chapters address such issues from various critical perspectives, book-length studies on gender in the early American theater are still a scarcity.[1] This edited collection evolved from a research project addressing exactly this lacuna. Our original project title was "Gender and Comedy in the Age of the American Revolution," suggesting a strong—but not exclusive—focus on forgotten female playwrights and their frequent use of comic genres to address their concerns.[2] In the course of the project, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) from 2015 to 2018 and situated at the University of Salzburg, Austria, we gradually moved from rebuilding an archive of female dramatists and plays to asking

1 A notable exception is Sarah Chinn's *Spectacular Men: Race, Gender, and Nation on the Early American Stage.* However, this book differs from our collection both in terms of its exclusive historical focus on the early Republic and in terms of its concern with masculinity specifically.

2 See Poole, "Interview Ingrid Ladner;" Poole, "'Remembering the Ladies.'"

broader questions about the politics of gender in the American theater of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The essays collected here are based on two conferences, both held in Salzburg, organized by the project's team (Verena Holztrattner, Leopold Lippert, Ralph Poole, and Michael Streif) in cooperation with the section "Art Polemics—Polemic Art" of the joint focus "Science and Art" of the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg and the Mozarteum University Salzburg: "The Politics and Polemics of Gender in Early American Theater" (2016) and "Women Frontstage: Female Polemics and the American Revolution" (2018; this conference also served as the 12th meeting of the EAAS [European Association for American Studies] European Study Group of 19th Century American Literature). The scope of these essays both give evidence to our original tighter focus and to the expansion the project underwent, not least through the fabulous and critical papers given at these conferences.

While taking race, class, sexuality, and religion amongst other intersectionalities in account, this book underscores gender as a crucial category for a revised understanding of early American theater. Throughout the eighteenth century and until the early nineteenth century, i.e. in what is usually considered the long eighteenth century, North American settler colonists have struggled to negotiate the increasing burden of colonial (especially British) rule and the equally increasing wish to found a republic based on a democratic creed. The ways in which this negotiation reverberates in emerging American theater practice prove an especially fruitful ground to investigate how politicized aesthetics operate. Stressing the precarious and provisional character of early American actualities and the dialogical intercourse between arts and politics, Gary A. Richardson is one of the few scholars to particularly accentuate the function of gender in this assemblage of cultural transactions in the theater:

> Versions of the nation's fluid social, economic, and political realities have served not merely as background or context for these plays' composition and production but as distinct voices with which the plays have been in dialogue. The general politics of culture, issues of racial and ethnic identity, the import of race and ethnicity upon the nation's sense of itself, anxieties about economic dislocation, and conflicts surrounding gender configurations—all these topics found their way onto the American stage long before the social protest theater of the 1930s or the 1960s. (x)

At the end of the eighteenth century, the playhouse as an actual cultural space indeed was a realm "that was not only public but often explicitly political, a forum where issues of power and public policy were routinely aired," writes

Faye E. Dudden in her survey of the role of women, especially actresses and audiences, in the American theater at the time (16-17). While mainly white male playwrights took advantage of this public arena to articulate their concerns, the theater was one of the few cultural venues where also women could raise their voices as playwrights. To be sure, the playing field was far from equal. As Michael Warner contends with respect to early American print culture, "although women were reading printed goods in colonial America, very few of those goods were written by women. Nor is it the case that the gender barrier in letters dissolved when women took up pens to write" (15). Warner furthermore asserts that access to "linguistic technologies—speaking, reading, writing, and printing" was tied in to "forms of domination as race, gender, and status" (17). Warner's study (among others by Jay Fliegelman or Christopher Looby) was central to animating early American studies to bring "to light both the ways in which new technologies of print, on the one hand, and revolutionary Americans' sometimes hyperbolic emphasis on authenticity, voice, and rhetoric on the other, shaped theories of citizenship, nationalism, and identity during the revolutionary period" (Murison 243).[3]

In our book, we strongly refer to (and rely on) the cultural practices of having plays printed and circulated as major part of their political agenda—this is especially true for closet dramas that were expressly meant to be read in private circles and not performed on the public stage but that could nevertheless enact a "virtual theatricality" by transcending a purely textual basis and questioning the representational politics of the public sphere (Lippert, "Virtual Theatricality" 71-72). At the same time, we acknowledge the growing body of research paying close attention to oral traditions, performance practices, and material culture. The work of Gay Gibson Cima, for instance, is particularly insightful in this regard. Cima looks at how early American women critics created various gestural or rhetorical "host bodies," for example, by choosing pseudonyms, "to shield themselves from censure as they spoke, whether in person or in print" (3). These women entered the public sphere performing in print through rhetorical moves and/or in person through gestural and oral means, which "enabled them both to shape and to critique notions of race, American-ness, and gender" (Cima 3-4). Dudden similarly partakes in the shift of scholarly attention from the play proper—the script—to practices of performance both on the stage and in the audience. She points out

3 For bringing questions of gender and sexuality into this discourse on early American print culture, see Burgett; and Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom*.

that women's status within the early American theatrical sphere remained precarious. Especially their physical presence on the stage as actresses was perceived "in uncomfortably close proximity to the 'public women'—slang for prostitutes—who crowded the third tier" (21) of that playhouse. Wendy Bellion, in her account on the Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, also draws attention to spectatorship which, as she asserts, cut across class, race, and gender lines. She describes the spectators' various sensory contributions as they "listened, murmured, chatted, coughed, whistled, sneezed, yelled, swore, laughed, clapped, and thumped about" ("Vision" 341)—a form of popular sensory experience that Elizabeth Maddock Dillon calls an "aesthesis from below" ("Aesthesis" 368). Sensations such as those registered in the Chestnut Street Theater, Lauren F. Klein points out, "at times interfered with the experience of aesthetic pleasure that the plays' producers sought to achieve" (440).[4] The close proximity of black and white men and women in theater audiences offered unusual possibilities of observing one another and of facilitating practices of social differentiation quite at odds with what was offered on stage. Like Bellion, Dillon looks at such signifying practices of audiences as part of an alternative aesthetic archive that needs to be considered to get a truer picture of the theatrical culture at the time. She points out that while today the theater often is associated with cultural elitism, historically this was not the case. In her account of the theater of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world (which includes locations such as London, Boston, New York, Charleston, Philadelphia, and Kingston, Jamaica), this theater "attracted broad swaths of the population—so much so that state authorities often sought to limit the ability of theatres to gather 'promiscuous multitudes' in which persons commingled across lines of class, race, and gender" (*New World Drama* 13). In this way, Dillon concludes, "the theatrical public was of a distinctly different shape than the white, male, property-owning electorate on either side of the ocean *and* distinct, as well, from a literate print public" (*New World Drama* 13, original emphasis).

4 Bellion contrasts such spectatorships to the ones attending, for example, Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum, "which attracted a largely white, male, and affluent audience—or PAFA [the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts], which was idealized as a space of aesthetic and social refinement" ("Vision" 337). See also Bellion's monograph *Citizen Spectator*.

How American Is It? Revisiting the (Dis)Avowal of Early American Theater

One of the enduring laments in the scholarship of American theater history reiterates that before the twentieth century there was no American drama of any major significance. Renowned drama scholar C. W. E. Bigsby, for example, opens his still widely read 1982 study *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama* with the remark: "American drama, as a serious form, is a product of the twentieth century" (vii).[5] Even in more recent surveys of early American theater and drama, one can read about the theatrical barrenness and unproductiveness of eras preceding the twentieth century. In their introduction to Volume I of the 1998 edition of *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*, Bigsby and Don B. Wilmeth state that the supposedly scattered moments of early American dramatic efforts are marked by striving to copy European and mostly British models. Such Eurocentric attitudes would instill in their readers the notion that the "tradition" of theater in America "was external to its country" (3), the earliest playwrights being "European, as were the popular actors. Theatre building followed European models, as did styles of production" (3). As these examples suggest, for many theater scholars until recently, the genre of American drama has been perceived as the stepchild of American literary culture or rather, as Susan Harris Smith has aptly called it, as *The Bastard Art*, hence the subtitle of her survey on American drama. Whether out of religious, aesthetic, or ideological bias, the nation's cultural arbiters have for a long time been at best ambivalent, more often dismissive about America's drama and its functions and merits. More recently, scholars have added melodrama as a distinct and indeed pivotal literary form not only shaping much of nineteenth-century aesthetic and ethical perception of the American public, but also reaching way into the twentieth century and beyond with its long-lasting effects.[6]

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5 The quote remains unchanged in the online version of 2008. The claim that any drama prior to O'Neill should be of considerably less aesthetic value has notoriously been repeated at least until the late 1980s in other overviews as well, for example in Bernard F. Dukore's, who states that "[for] American drama significant to warrant worldwide attention the designation of a starting point is atypically easy. It begins with Eugene O'Neill" (1).

6 See Gerould; Richardson; Postlewait; Kelleter, Krah and Mayer; Poole and Saal.

The critical disavowal of an early American theater tradition alongside an erroneously reiterated proclamation of a prevalent monolithic European theatrical practice up until the early twentieth century, articulated in highly prestigious academic venues, disregards the multiple forms of polyphonic exchange between European and American theater and performance histories. Susan Castillo is among those scholars who opt for a different, revised appraisal of such histories, arguing that theatricality in America cannot be regarded as governed exclusively by European mores and codes. Instead, Castillo argues that the *Colonial Encounters in New World Writing*, as the title of her seminal 2006 study suggests, have produced a range of performative, polyphonic texts which include plays alongside other texts that "perform America" producing "a cacophony of European and native voices attempting to make sense of each other" (2).[7] Another scholar interested in different genealogies of American theater is Peter A. Davis, who sets out to counter longstanding "truisms" such as the following:

> American culture before 1800 is not renowned for its theatre, and American theatre before 1800 is not known for its dramatic literature. […] It is a perception that has influenced the development of American plays and playwrights since the first performances by Europeans more than four hundred years ago, and it still forms the basis of our present understanding of early American theatre. (216)

The quote is taken from the very same *Cambridge History of American Theatre*, edited by Bigsby and Wilmeth, that was mentioned before. Davis here stresses the urgency of rewriting this common lore and provides a closer examination of the "surprising number and variety of plays, written by an equally surprising assortment of playwrights" (216). Even more importantly, he stresses the

7 In contrast, Jeffrey H. Richards, while providing fascinating thick and close readings of some early American plays, still grounds his entire study on the presumption that all early drama relies on predominantly British predecessors and that accordingly the plots revolve less around current topics than around adapting successful models to American circumstances. He incessantly repeats the claim of the emergence of a genuine American drama based on British models, for example, when he writes that "these chapters argue, on the one hand, the deep dependence on a foreign dramatic literature that dominated the American stage throughout the period, while on the other, they maintain that the nearly single-minded obsession with London favorites came to represent both gross and subtle reflections of a multiplicity of identities quite other than 'British'" (33).

fact that against standard theater history that shuns any closer attention to pre-nineteenth-century American drama, this drama very much was an integral part of culture and society.

This revisionist perspective on the various practices of theatricality in early American social life also entails looking anew at the overbearing claim concerning the long-lasting legacy of the Puritan abhorrence of theater. While it is true that there was a ban to stage plays in many English colonies, especially those under Puritan rule, the knowledge of and indeed pleasure in *reading* dramatic literature was abundant. Taking a look at the libraries of demagogues against the theater such as Cotton Mather's—exceptionally well-stocked with both ancient and contemporary plays—reveals the extent to which theater and dramatic aesthetics influenced the colonial mind in spite of the great public and political opposition to the genre. As theater historian Theresa Saxon asserts:

> Common critical practice has led to a somewhat vexed argument that the moral code and value system that contributed to the demise of theatres in Commonwealth England under Puritan rule were transplanted, more or less intact, to Plymouth Rock. […] But puritan anti-theatricality was itself a multifaceted series of ideological perspectives. We should note that performances and entertainments were a feature of colonial life in New England. (68)

Partly, the Puritans' antipathy to drama was grounded in a belief that the imagination was a faculty linked to "the lower soul" and thus subordinate to reason and will (Tichi 87). The world of the stage was seen as an "obviously false environment," since here, as Cecelia Tichi explains, "the dramatist not only purports to create a quasi-reality of his own, but he populates it with men pretending to be other than what in nature they really are" (91). Especially when it came to actors playing roles of the opposite sex on stage, the Puritans' aversion to such performed cross-dressing became apparent since that "was seen as the theatre's perilous blurring of gender roles" (Castillo 149). However, even among the most anti-theatrical Puritans, as Castillo points out, "there existed an awareness of the didactic power of polyphonic texts" (58). This can be seen, for example, in dialogical passages of sermons, which for Puritan writers served specific pedagogic and communicative purposes. Jeffrey H. Richards specifically mentions writers "as antitheatrically orthodox as Michael Wigglesworth and Edward Taylor" (19) who made use of such dialogical exchanges in their poems.

In many ways, therefore, it makes sense to start reviewing the variety and change of attitudes against or in favor of the theater in the course of the eighteenth century by looking at the "legacy" of Puritan antitheatricality. As can be seen, the Puritans' aversions to theater were manifold and contradictory, and while it is true that the enduring effects of this legacy can still be felt in the discussions at the end of the century, more and other reasons have been added. As Jean-Christophe Agnew argues, the Puritans took issue with the theater because for them the action on stage was suspicious and dangerous since it was based on enacting pretended behaviors and therefore suggested that character was not necessarily proven by "outward signs" (128). Even more importantly for the theatrical debates of the late eighteenth century, however, was the Puritan association of the hypocrisy of the theater with a growing merchant population: "The very historical circumstances that had hardened the hearts of New England settlers against an outcast theater rendered them only grudgingly tolerant of the players' more enterprising neighbors: the commercial middlemen" (Agnew 151). Heather S. Nathans adds that the inference suggests "that what an actor could dissemble on the stage, a merchant could dissemble in the city square, selling bad grain for good and extorting high fees for shoddy merchandise" (20).

While both Agnew and Nathans assert the influence of Puritan antitheatricality on the theater debates of the late eighteenth century, especially on the rhetoric of Massachusetts's anti-theater laws, Nathans in particular also sees a shift "from a Puritan-based disdain for the ungodliness of theater, to a more overt resistance to British interference in American life" (26). She asserts that the resistance to staging plays must be seen in light of the discussions surrounding politics as enacted democratic experiments. Referring to the situation in Philadelphia during the first years of the early Republic, she writes: "The State Constitutionalists resisted the theater partly as an expression of partisan solidarity, since they felt that the prospect of a theater undermined the cultural simplicity at the heart of Pennsylvania's democratic experiment" (51). Trish Loughran adds that from today's perspective contrasting stage entertainments with populist political experiments may seem unlikely given the perception that in contemporary American culture such entertainment is understood as a form of popular, if not populist, culture: "In the eighteenth century, however, theater was an *essentially* nonpopulist activity, associated […] with nondemocratic class divides (the province of the rich—and the British)" (203, original emphasis). How then do gender and sexuality play into such experimental fields of theatrical politics?

"Doing Art Means Displacing Art's Borders":[8] Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Aesthetics

For obvious reasons being a highly politicized period, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were, contrary to the beliefs of many American literary historians, not devoid of literary merits. And we believe that the emerging American drama and theater are an especially fruitful ground to investigate the way politicized aesthetics operate, or as Jason Shaffer declares: "By now, the importance of the theatre and theatricality for the study of early America must be clear to anyone following the field for the last several decades" (279). There are critics, to be sure, who warn against basing our understanding of early American drama and theater solely on the grounds of their political, social, and economic significance. In this collection therefore we consider "*both* inquiry into aesthetics *and* inquiry that privileges literature's function as art and imaginative expression," and by doing so we follow Edward Cahill and Edward Larkin's proposition to understand aesthetics "as intimately related to politics and historical change, even as it attempts to take its aesthetic objects on their own terms" (238, original emphasis).

Inquiring into the efficacy of an artistic practice that has imported the political into the aesthetic, Jacques Rancière dates the eighteenth century as a period of transition from a pedagogical model of representational mediation to one of aesthetic distance. The representational model posits that what the viewer sees on a stage is a set of signs formed according to an artist's intention. "By recognizing these signs," Rancière argues, "the spectator is supposedly induced into a specific reading of the world around us, leading, in turn, to the feeling of a certain proximity or distance, and ultimately to the spectator's intervening into the situation staged by the author" (136). Rancière's counterclaim follows Jean-Jacques Rousseau's lead, who in his *Lettre à M. D'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758) argues against the presumption of a direct relation between the performance of bodies on stage and its effects on the minds of spectators as well as its consequences for their behavior outside the theater. Rancière speaks of the paradoxes of political art in the sense that a connection between art and politics should be cast in terms of dissensus: "[A]rtworks can produce effects of dissensus precisely because they neither give lessons nor have any destination" (140).

8 Rancière 149.

We believe theatricality in the era of the American Revolution indeed does not follow a direct, i.e. representationally pedagogic aim, but offers a politics of aesthetics that reconfigures the audience's experience. Instead of a direct cause-effect relationship between the playwrights' intention realized in staging or reading their plays and the political mobilization of the viewer or reader, our understanding of a politics of aesthetics is grounded on the premise that the plays are aesthetic realities in and of themselves within their very own specific framework of time and space, namely the long eighteenth century in North America. And within this given framework, it is the writers whose strategies aim to change the frames according to which we perceive the visible and combine it with specific invisible elements and meaning. To make the invisible visible, to rupture given relations between objects and meanings, to invent new relations that were previously unrelated: such a politics of aesthetics reframes the "real" and thus helps build new relationships between reality and appearance as well as between the individual and the collective.[9]

In Rancière's terms, what these artists and their works perform is the creation of a new dramaturgy of the intelligible by creating new modes of individuality, new forms of perception, new models of common experience, and therefore a new frame of "we"—"whose emergence is the element that disrupts the distribution of social parts, […] of those who have no part—not the wretched, but the anonymous" (Rancière 142). Accordingly, in this collection we are concerned, amongst other things, with women's social anonymity being reframed by new forms of individuality as part of the world of common experience that now is perceived and understood as the world of a shared impersonal experience. How this paradox of producing effects by suspending any direct cause-effect relationship is resolved will be a matter of the analysis of the single works that this book unearths and reconsiders.

When dealing with questions of gender in early America, we are aware that what Gayle Rubin in her groundbreaking 1975 essay called the sex/gender system—namely contrasting the two fixed sexes on the one hand with gender as a changeable set of social arrangements on the other—was still much more ambiguous and mutable in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This effected yet another instance of dissensus in a Rancièrian manner, namely that *gender* and *sex* were not clearly distinguished but used inter-

9 For a Rancièrian reading of early American theatrical aesthetics drawing attention to the (in)adequate representation of materiality as symbolic bodies, see Lippert, "Theatrical Aesthetics."

changeably—Thomas Laqueur famously speaks of a "one-sex model" prior to the eighteenth century that distinguishes men and women "as hierarchically ranked versions of each other" rather than categorizing them as two opposite and distinct sexes (802). As Greta LaFleur argues with regard to men and women maintaining their "natural state" (488), there was hardly any consensus about what this "natural state" entailed. She refers, for instance, to Mary Wollstonecraft's polemical question in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), "Is woman in a natural state?" (266), and to Wollstonecraft's assertion that women were "out" of their natural state by lacking education, by labeling them as childlike and irrational, and by deeming them unsuitable for participation in civic life. LaFleur concludes

> that in the late eighteenth century in North America, there was in fact a widespread cultural awareness and recognition of the fact that gender was not necessarily or even often "natural;" that socially acceptable womanhood and manhood could assume plural and sometimes aberrant forms; and that there was a wide, but not universal, degree of tolerance for individual deviations from conventional gender behaviors or presentations. (489)

Whereas it may seem challenging for us today to acknowledge an understanding of the ways gender "worked" in early America, we actually could draw a transhistorical connection between the instability of gender during this period and our contemporary politics of gender and sexuality. As LaFleur suggests for our practice in scholarship and teaching, we should adjust the narrativization of what gender meant in eighteenth-century North America and recognize that gender "was probably understood very similarly to the way that we understand it now: as flexible, contingent, and non-self-identical" (495). This certainly does not mean that there were no social pressures forcing men and women to conform to certain racial, religious, geographical, and class-bound standards of femininity and masculinity—and our volume very much attests to such forces—but this is the case in our world as well. Studying the politics of gender in early America therefore is worthwhile for acknowledging the existence of "gender trouble" way before the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; with our volume we hope to contribute to such an historicization of gender and sexuality and their multifarious politics of aesthetics.

Constellations of Gender and Theatricality in Early America: The Essays

The essays gathered in this collection represent a broad (yet not necessarily comprehensive) inquiry into various constellations of gender and theatricality in early America, with a particular focus on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They include detailed analyses of individual plays and the ways in which they represent gender through dramatic dialogue and action; critical discussions of the cultural politics of gender performativity and gendered conduct, in such varied domains as the educational system, the family, institutional politics, or the military; explorations of the possibilities and limitations of female authorship; as well as analyses of how in early American theater, gender intersected with other markers of cultural difference, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, nation, dis/ability, or socioeconomic class. The essays explore quite different performance histories and contexts, ranging from the formalized stage and auditorium of a playhouse in Philadelphia or New York to the improvised scenes of college theatricals to the mundane enactments of everyday life in revolutionary and early national America.

In the essay that opens the collection, "The Male Stage: College Theatricals and Masculinity in the Age of the American Revolution," Michael Streif looks at theatrical pieces written and performed by male college students during annual commencement ceremonies in the latter half of the eighteenth century. As Streif points out, these ceremonies were highly popular among the local population, and for many early Americans they provided the only access to the theater as a cultural form. Streif discusses five dramatic dialogues performed at Harvard, Yale, and the College of Philadelphia and shows that these pieces used theatrical form in order to engage in complex (and often surprisingly ambivalent) discussions of masculinity, race, and nation. Through close readings of the dialogues and their performance contexts, Streif points out that the white male elite writers/performers exhibited a humorous and playful attitude towards their own "manhood," and engaged in self-irony and self-ridicule. What is more, the dialogues negotiated masculinity in conjunction with questions of race and nation, comparing and contrasting, for instance, white and black, as well as "American" and "British" masculinities.

In the first of two essays in this collection which are concerned specifically with Susanna Haswell Rowson's 1794 play *Slaves in Algiers* (perhaps one of the most prominent theatrical works of the early national period), Etti Gordon Ginzburg problematizes the unquestioned feminism that existing

readings attribute to the play and its author. Her essay, entitled "Liminal Spaces: Cross-Dressing, Monetary Transfers and Other Real and Imaginary Crossovers in Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*," takes a more ambivalent stance instead, and suggests that despite marked feminist statements in the prologue and epilogue, the play as a whole fails to live up to its (ostensibly) feminist objectives. By paying close attention to three "liminal spaces" in the play—cross-dressing, religious conversion, and monetary exchange—Ginzburg argues that *Slaves in Algiers* proposes mostly traditionalist and conservative, rather than feminist, gender politics. The character of Fetnah in particular is indicative of such conservatism: While Fetnah enacts a form of "republican motherhood gone wild" that could be potentially transgressive, the agency of the character is always already contained by the larger narrative and cultural logic of the play. Through a discourse of "safety" in particular, Ginzburg argues, the play renders femininity in highly traditional ways, and thus amounts to little more than yet another dramatization of (conservative) republican motherhood.

In her essay, "Partisan Allegories of Race and Desire: Algerian Captivity as a Musical Entertainment in Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*," Daniela Daniele suggests that the play's form replicates and reinforces the racial boundaries between its characters, as Rowson assigns the musical numbers to non-Anglo characters only. Even though no vocal or musical score is extant, Daniele argues, the lyrical tone of the songs creates an enclosed, parallel space of appearance that immediately separates the non-Anglo singers from the rest of the play. Comparing Rowson's play to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's contemporaneous Orientalist Singspiel *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782), Daniele shows how *Slaves in Algiers*' dramatic structure creates a racist "double standard" according to which the "liberty" of non-Anglo characters is severely curtailed and their desires are repeatedly frustrated. The racial conservatism of Rowson's comedy that forecloses interracial love or an eventual interracial union is thus mirrored in the formal partitions that structure *Slaves in Algiers* from its very beginning.

In her piece on playwright, poet, and women's rights advocate Judith Sargent Murray, "American Theater and the Quest for a Republican Identity: Judith S. Murray's *The Medium; or, Virtue Triumphant* (1795)," Zoe Detsi examines how the play creatively attempts to align women's social roles in the early national period with the dominant ideological frameworks of republicanism and individual liberty. *The Medium*, Detsi argues, serves as a cultural site where Murray can frame her own version of "republican womanhood" as imbued

with the revolutionary ideas of personal freedom and equality. Hence, *The Medium*, even though it does not give up on such gendered notions as modesty and domesticity, suggests a version of femininity that is characterized by emotional strength, self-fulfillment, and sound judgment. As Detsi shows, Murray's female characters are given a certain agency in their decisions—albeit without compromising the norms of respectability and propriety.

Astrid M. Fellner's essay, "The Theatricality of Sexual Difference in Late-Eighteenth-Century America: Deborah Sampson's Gender Masquerade," is similarly concerned with questions of female agency in the revolutionary and early national periods. Unlike Detsi, however, Fellner does not discuss dramatic characters in a play. Instead, her focus is on the historical figure of Deborah Sampson, who joined the revolutionary army cross-dressed as a man. In 1802, Sampson attempted to capitalize on her experience in the military in a well-received lecture tour that led her to perform on various stages in New England and Eastern New York. Analyzing the theatrical aspects of this lecture tour, which included a public address as well as various songs and a rifle drill in uniform, Fellner suggests that Sampson's cross-dressing performances detached the notion of gender from its supposed origins in biological difference, and allowed early American audiences to explore the contingencies in the links between sex, gender, and desire.

Like Fellner's essay, Verena Holztrattner's "Sowing the Seeds of Virtue: Susanna Haswell Rowson's Contributions to Conduct Literature," is also concerned with theatricality and performativity in a broader cultural sense: the text explores the theatricality of conduct literature by Susanna Haswell Rowson. Rowson, who had many careers ranging from novelist to actress to teacher, used a variety of literary genres to teach especially young women how to behave and act properly. Holztrattner places Rowson's efforts in the context of the larger renegotiation of gender roles in the early Republic, and suggests that theatrical form (for instance, dialogue, role play, or fully-fledged drama) proved a particularly useful tool for Rowson to achieve her educational goals. Politically speaking, however, Rowson's stance on gendered conduct is highly ambivalent and warrants differentiated analysis: Holztrattner suggests that her conduct advice was "tentatively subversive yet never confrontational," and that Rowson attempted to acknowledge both the conservative need for social and cultural stability in the postwar period and the proto-feminist desire to give women an active, and knowledgeable, voice in the public debates of the early Republic.

In her essay "Porous Spheres in Times of War: *The Fair Americans* and the Questioning of Gender Roles within the Family," Pauline Pilote examines Mary Carr's play on the War of 1812, *The Fair Americans* (originally performed as *The Return from Camp* at the Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia in 1815) and suggests that the piece represents a curious anomaly among literature on the armed conflict: Rather than centering on major military figures (such as Generals Warren and Pike), Carr focuses on a village on the shores of Lake Erie, and in particular on the domestic space of two families living there. Because the play combines two stage sets (men on the front and women at home) in the same theatrical space, Pilote explains, *The Fair Americans* structurally blurs the boundaries between the public and private spheres, and thus troubles the ideology of gendered separate spheres already at the time of its consolidation. In the essay, Pilote also highlights the personal connection Mary Carr (and her writing) had to the War of 1812: Her husband died (most likely) from wounds inflicted in the conflict, and Carr had to pick up writing to support herself and her children after his death, which made her one of the first American women to make a living from writing and editing.

Alexandra Ganser's essay "'O'er us, rovers free': Performing Gender and National Identity in Jacksonian Pirate Melodrama" discusses Jacksonian American negotiations of masculinity by looking at the popular genre of pirate melodrama. Through readings of Lemuel Sawyer's *Blackbeard* (1824) and Joseph Stevens Jones's *Captain Kyd* (1830), Ganser suggests that the joint construction of notions of gender and piracy worked to consolidate the idea of a national, U.S. American identity on the popular stage—despite the oftentimes transatlantic genealogies of these dramatic works. For Ganser, the spectacular nature of these plays, and their appeal to senses and sensibilities, was used to create an affective bond within a framework of "folk patriotism" that excluded racial and social Others. Moreover, the essay analyzes how the plays negotiate conflicting versions of masculinity in a period of immigration, industrial growth, and socio-economic transformation, and shows how discourses of patriotism and heterosexuality (and heterosexual romance) were conjoined to generate "model" American citizens.

Taken together, the essays provide fresh insights into how the theater as a form and medium—but also as a cultural logic—constituted a popular site for the articulation and negotiation of gendered ways of speaking, behaving, and being—sometimes explicitly, sometimes obscured or even concealed. In the theater, these essays suggest, early Americans could rehearse and adjust various, and oftentimes conflicted, masculine, feminine, and trans identity

positions and behaviors. By looking more closely at dramatic form and theatrical performance, the essays shed new light on how early Americans literally performed their gendered selves into being, and how they related these gendered selves to the wider cultural contexts in which they were operating. As the essays make clear, the politics of gender in early American theater always already transcended the confines of a particular stage or playhouse, and resonated with broader cultural debates around national identity and nation building in a time of enormous social and political change.

The publication of this book has been made possible by funding from the University of Salzburg, the City of Salzburg, as well as the Stiftungs- und Fördergesellschaft der Paris Lodron Universität Salzburg. Karin Wohlgemuth at the University of Salzburg has been a great help with the administrative complexities of getting this book to print, as has been Annika Linnemann at Transcript Verlag. We extend our gratitude to all of these people and institutions.

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The Male Stage
College Theatricals and Masculinity in the Age of the American Revolution

Michael Streif

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the colonial colleges turned out to be a driving force in the development of drama in British America, where theater was largely considered sinful and, at times, banned by the law.[1] Surprisingly, however, the vast majority of printed histories of American theater has paid little—if any—attention to college drama, often dedicating but a paragraph or a footnote to student theatricals. This essay is designed to revisit

1 Antitheatrical prejudice was brought to the American colonies by the first settlers. For English Puritans the theater stood for chaos and anarchism and was against the laws of God. The stage was considered the church of Satan, since it allegedly subverted the idea of true Christianity. The Puritans who immigrated to America brought these severe prejudices with them (Houchin 6). Antitheatrical legislation, however, differed from colony to colony. The General Court of Massachusetts, for instance, passed the so-called "Act to Prevent Stage-Plays and other Theatrical Entertainment" in March 1750. This document stated that "[f]or preventing and avoiding the many and great mischiefs which arise from public stage-plays, interludes, and other theatrical entertainments, which not only occasion great and unnecessary expenses, and discourage industry and frugality, but likewise tend generally to increase immorality, impiety, and a contempt of religion. […] [If] any person or persons shall be present, as an actor or spectator of any stage-play, interlude, or theatrical entertainment in any house, room, or place where a greater number of persons than twenty shall be assembled together, every such person shall forfeit and pay […] five pounds" (qtd. in Johnson and Burling 135-36). This law remained in effect until 1793 (Johnson and Burling 136). On August 30, 1762, Rhode Island passed "An Act to Prevent Stage Plays and other Theatrical Entertainments within this Colony," copying the preamble of the Massachusetts law word by word and using a similar diction throughout the document (Seilhamer 127-28). People involved in or attending theatrical productions in the latter half of the eighteenth century were thus not only attacked "merely" for moral reasons, they were in fact driven into illegality.

and renegotiate the significance of college drama in a time of radical political change, an era characterized by the American colonies' struggle to gain independence, the Revolutionary War, and the process of building a new nation based on a distinct cultural and political ideology.

The dialogues written and performed by students as part of the annual festive commencement ceremonies at the College of Philadelphia, Harvard, and Yale in the latter half of the eighteenth century were distinctly theatrical in nature. The subject matters of the pieces became more complex and sophisticated as the eighteenth century drew to a close, and the commencement ceremonies were of particular significance not only for the students and college members involved but also for the population of the college towns.

The five dialogues discussed in this essay were performed between 1776 and 1797 at the three abovementioned colleges, and they are representative of dramatic endeavors at academies in the age of the American Revolution and the establishment of the new Republic. All pieces were, of course, written and performed exclusively by men, and therefore reading and discussing these texts is worthwhile not only in terms of their dramatic and theatrical elements, but also because they show to what extent the notion of "manliness" was negotiated in a time when masculinity was far from being a stable concept.

Among the commenters who have acknowledged the significance of college drama is Odai Johnson, who, in his 2008 essay "Drama in the Academies of Early America," stresses the fact that colleges were, "for pedagogical purposes, [...] exempt from antitheatrical legislation" (177). The pedagogical purpose was training in oratory, and dramatic performances were most often disguised as didactic dialogues or forensic disputes during commencement ceremonies. A printed *Account of the Commencement in the College of Philadelphia* in May 1775 provides an overview of how the day-long ceremony was structured. The festive act started with a "Part of the Church service, and an occasional prayer, by the Provost." This service was succeeded by an "Anthem, accompanied with the organ and other instrumental music" and a "Latin Salutatory Oration." Several speeches by single students as well as a "Latin Syllogistic Dispute" involving three speakers followed before the degrees of Bachelors and Masters of Arts were officially awarded to the young men who had finished their studies. Next came the dramatic dialogue, a "Valedictory Oration," and a "Charge to the Graduates, by the Prov[ost]." The day came to an end with a "Concluding Prayer" (*Account* 1-2). This outline shows that the entire commencement ceremony was of a theatrical nature: framed by a church service

and a prayer, the program is characterized throughout by performances on a stage before a full audience who gave "great and generous applause [...] to the different speakers and to their exercises" (*Account* 2). To be sure, this theatrical dimension becomes most evident in the performances of dramatic dialogues.

These dialogues were typically composed by students or alumni of the respective college (and, as in the case of Philadelphia, sometimes by the college president himself). In the foreword of a printing of two dialogues performed in Yale in 1776, the anonymous authors state that they are only in their third year of their college studies, and they express their hope "that the Critic will not be so unkind as to censure their Defects with his utmost Severity" (*Two Dialogues* 3). In his volume *American Drama*, Gary A. Richardson argues that the quality of commencement dialogues was "uniformly poor" (5); he admits, however, that

> [d]espite their formulaic and subdramatic natures, the collegiate exercises and dialogues served an essential function in the development of the fledgling American drama. They provided American students with opportunities to see and participate in dramatic productions and thereby not only encouraged would-be dramatists and prospective audiences by providing an aesthetic training ground, but also gave intellectual credibility and social acceptability to dramatic endeavors. (5)

Whether the dramatic quality of the dialogues was in fact "uniformly poor" lies, of course, in the eye of the beholder. Formulaic some of these exercises may have been (in particular those presented at the College of Philadelphia in the 1760s, since most of them focused on a solemn celebration of Great Britain using the same pattern year after year rather than developing a specific plot); why Richardson claims they were "subdramatic," however, is not fully comprehensible, for most of these dialogues were *decidedly* dramatic, as they were written to achieve an emotional effect on the audience. They were also clearly theatrical, for they were written expressly to be performed before an audience. These pieces were usually written for two to three speakers, all of whom had to slip into a specific role.

College of Philadelphia: A Surprising Sense of Humor

Most of the dramatic dialogues performed during commencement exercises that are available today were written and performed at the College of Philadel-

phia (today's University of Pennsylvania). In 1755, William Smith (1727-1803) became the first provost of this school, which had been founded six years earlier. He held his office until 1779 and again from 1789 to 1791 ("William Smith" n.pag.). Smith was a proponent of the theater and introduced spoken commencement exercises in English, since he felt that proper pronunciation of the English language was no less important than knowing Latin and Greek (see Barone 114-15). Under Smith's supervision, numerous dialogues were written and performed during commencement ceremonies at the College of Philadelphia. It is obvious that Smith's focus was on oratory training rather than on the contents of the dialogues: throughout the 1760s, the subject-matter of these pieces hardly saw a change, for they were all written in order to celebrate Great Britain and the king. The language used is remarkably turgid, even for eighteenth-century standards. All dialogues are written in verse, predominantly in rhyming couplets. Of the 1770s and '80s, hardly any commencement dialogues have survived.

The dialogue composed for the 1790 public commencement represents a stark contrast to all available earlier performances at the College of Philadelphia; it stands out due to its surprisingly humorous elements, and it includes stage directions. Whereas the text culminates once again in impassionate rapture (this time praising the values of science, music, peace, and religion), the first part is characterized by a remarkably self-ironic attitude. The characters no longer bear names that evoke the picture of figures of Greek mythology or ancient writings; they are simply called M. and C. The character called C. expresses a great nervousness when speaking "before so many ladies," and he explains his rhetorical insufficiency:

> My fears and bashfulness so much prevail
> Before the *ladies*—constantly I fail.
> Of my best speeches I forget one half,
> And, quite confounded, like an awkward calf,
> Around me raise an universal laugh. (Smith 3, original emphasis)

C.'s remarks emphasize how exceptional it was to see women in the usually all-male environment of a college. Commencement ceremonies were generally open to everyone, regardless of their gender or race.[2] The speaker, the dia-

2 Samuel Eliot Morison quotes a poem by an unidentified author that circulated in the eighteenth century, entitled "Satyrical Description of Commencement." This poem was written about commencement ceremonies at Harvard and reads as follows: "All Sizes

logue humorously implies, is intimidated by such diversity, which disrupts the male homosociality the students are accustomed to, and he makes fun of traditional, self-assured notions of masculinity. After expressing his irritation, C. attempts to quit the scene but is—as the stage direction reveals—caught by M., who tells him to stay and continue speaking. M. compares C. to "some coy maiden on her wedding night" (4), thus contributing to the mockery C. already made of his own manliness. Apparently not the least disturbed by this unflattering comparison, C. finds his voice again and declares during a longer monologue:

> But, ladies! not to tire you longer, say—
> What shall we call th' amusement of the day?
> Is it a COMEDY? a FARCE?—Oh, no!
> For the whole world, we must not call it so.
> 'Tis a COMMENCEMENT—that I think's the name,
> Or general JAIL-DELIVERY—much the same—
> Or if they will excuse an odd conceit,
> About this tedious *scientific treat*,
> It may be liken'd, in my poor opinion,
> Exactly to the *peeling* of an ONION—
> Skin after skin, and knowledge after knowledge,
> All smelling rank of LEARNING and the COLLEGE—
> If you *peel on*, in hopes a core to find—
> Alas! there's little more than skin and rind. (5, original emphasis)

Such a display of self-mockery is extraordinary, for humor was certainly not among the typical ingredients of commencement acts. Quite the contrary, these ceremonies were hallmarked by seriousness, solemnity, and festiveness. All other available commencement exercises of the time—no matter at which college they were performed—have in common that they hardly show any sign of humor. What makes this dialogue even more outstanding is the fact that the humor is directed against the festive occasion itself, most likely a novelty

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and each Sex, the Ways do throng, / Both black and white ride Jib-by-jole along! / […] The Nut-brown Country Nymphs and rural Swains / […] Appear there on this celebrated Day: / Thus till near Night they flock; and in a Word, / The Town's a Cage fill'd with each kind of Bird!" (qtd. in Morison 121). Morison notes that the poem is said to have been printed in 1718 but that, judging from the language used, he doubts it was written before 1760 (121).

in 1790. Perhaps even more than ever before, the theatrical aspect was taking center stage, since this text with its inclusion of elements of comedy was clearly designed to make the audience laugh. This dialogue is more than a training in oratory, and it transcends the usual aim of lecturing the spectators. This work, with its tongue-in-cheek depiction of "unmanly manliness," is of an amusing quality, and it can thus be seen as a clear concession to the theater as a means of entertainment.

Harvard: Discussing Slavery

Dramatic writings presented during public commencements at Harvard in the eighteenth century are hard to find. Whether most of these texts were never printed or lost in the course of time is nigh impossible to verify today. Numerous announcements of and short comments on commencement acts in local newspapers of the time stand testament to the fact that dramatic dialogues did play a significant role in these ceremonies. In a 2017 article in *The Harvard Crimson*, Jeffrey W. Andrade and Matt B. Hoisch point out that in eighteenth-century Harvard,

> debates were common at graduations, a way to prove that years of schooling and study were not wasted or squandered. It was more about performance than politics: For much of the college's history until [the latter half of the eighteenth century], the debates had been in Latin and inaccessible to many. But […] the format shifted, debaters began to speak in English, and suddenly their words became meaningful to the larger public. (n.pag.)

Among the few surviving texts is a debate written and performed in 1773, noteworthy for its highly controversial topic. Entitled *A Forensic Dispute on the Legality of Enslaving the Africans*, the text composed by Harvard students Theodore Parsons and Eliphalet Pearson raises the question as to whether or not slavery can be defended on ethical grounds. This work is one of the few debates for which the entire transcript is still available (see Andrade and Hoisch n.pag.). Contrary to most other commencement dialogues, this piece has received critical attention, not for its being a student theatrical, but for the controversial nature of its content. At first glance, it may appear arguable whether such a "debate" can be classified as dramatic, for what is expressed throughout the disputation most likely represents the speakers' personal points of view; thus, they did not have to assume or enact specific roles. Larry E. Tise argues that

"[f]ar from being an abstract exchange of ideas between college chums, the evidence suggests that the debate was a public airing of an ongoing private feud" (30). Still, the text was carefully drafted and clearly composed to achieve a dramatic effect on the audience. As such, public debates can be considered theatrical, since the rhetoric used on such an occasion more than likely differed considerably from the language applied in a private dispute sans audience.

In *A Forensic Dispute*, Theodore Parsons speaks out in favor of slavery, whereas Eliphalet Pearson takes an anti-slavery stand. Parsons' arguments can, by today's standards, only be described as highly unsettling. He justifies white domination over Africans by comparing it to "the natural authority of parents over their children" (13). He goes on to insist that slaves in America are way better off than Africans on their native continent, in which the living conditions are "so much more miserable" (29). The "removal" of Africans from their native countries is thus, he suggests, "to be esteemed a favor" (27). Parson's passionate defense of slavery culminates in the following statement:

> But who I beseech you, ever thought the consent of a child, an ideot [sic], or a madman necessary to his subordination? Every whit as immaterial is the consent of these miserable *Africans*, whose real character seems to be a compound of the three last mentioned. What can avail his consent, who through ignorance of the means necessary to promote his happiness, is rendered altogether incapable of choosing for himself? […] [I]t is undoubtedly the duty of those, whom providence has favored with the means of improvement and understanding, and the wisdom resulting from such improvement to make use of their discretion in directing the conduct of those who want it. (28, original emphasis)

Such claims, Tise suggests, "represented the quintessence, the very heart of American proslavery thought whether colonial or antebellum" (32). Bernard Rosenthal, on the other hand, argues that Parsons' "unimaginative case" most probably did not meet with the spectators' approval and that "the audience was stacked in his [opponent's] favor" (76).[3] The opponent, Eliphalet Pearson, brings forward the argument that there is no natural inequality between whites and Africans:

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3 It would be interesting to know where Rosenthal has obtained this information. Unfortunately, he does not state any sources.

> I suppose you will hardly imagine the darkness of a man's skin incapacitates him for the direction of his conduct, and authorizes his neighbours, who may have the good fortune of a complexion a shade or two lighter, to exercise authority over him. And if the important difference does not lay here, it seems not very easy to determine where it does; unless perchance, it be in the quality of their hair; and if the principle of subordination lies here, I would advise every person, whose hair is inclined to deviate from a right line, to be upon guard. (21-22)

Pearson's anti-slavery arguments have been controversially discussed. Nancy V. Morrow claims that Pearson "misses his mark," and that the reference to physical features "seems particularly inappropriate since his adversary has not tried to raise any direct evidence of negro inferiority, couching any such implications in the abstract and rather benign parental analogy" (243). Morrow's remarks (written in the mid-1980s) are disturbing, and Pearson does not miss his mark, even if Parsons has not mentioned physical features to describe the assumed inferiority of Africans. Pearson introduces the topic of physicality in order to take the wind out of Parsons' sails. Moreover, Pearson *is* responsive to Parsons' comparison of white dominance over Africans to parent-child-relations: the example of a parent's "tender concern for the welfare of his offspring," he argues, is "far from being applicable to the point in hand" (20). That Morrow sees in Parsons' comparison no more than a "rather benign parental analogy" is particularly disconcerting: Morrow's statement represents a clear case of downplaying a clearly racist remark, and it makes the pro-slavery speaker's outrageous attempt to justify white supremacy appear harmless. Morrow, it must be stressed, is not alone in her criticism against the anti-slavery advocate: Tise goes as far as to call Pearson a "miserable failure," accusing him of not upholding the natural rights theory refuted by Parsons (379). Tise's comment does not stand the test of a thorough reading of the debate, since Pearson states that "such is the constitution of things with regard to man, such his nature, state, and condition, as renders it absolutely impossible that a principle, warranting the exercise of authority in any particular case […] should be correspondent to this end" (18). Pearson's remark leaves no doubt that in his point of view no one has the right to dominate others, hence he *does* express his belief in the same "natural rights" of all human beings.

Eliphalet Pearson's anti-slavery endorsement has also met with approval, to be sure. Rosenthal notes that Pearson "made such an impressive case, that apparently on the strength of his remarks, the debate was published" (76). He

goes on to praise Pearson's "devastating logic" and notes that the speaker's attack on his pro-slavery opponent "combine[s] moral indignation, penetrating psychological insight, and no small amount of wit" (76). Rosenthal appreciates what Morrow and Tise refuse to see, namely Pearson's decisive superiority, not only in terms of morals but also as far as the validity and credibility of his arguments are concerned.[4]

Despite its serious theme, *A Forensic Dispute* also offers entertainment. Pearson's comments are, at times, sarcastic ("I would advise every person, whose hair is inclined to deviate from a right line, to be upon guard" [22]) and ridicule the idea of racial superiority. Parsons reacts to Pearson's dry-humored comments by answering that he is "no enemy to humour," but that his opponent should have "saved […] this needless expence of wit" (22). Parsons is not in the mood for humorous remarks, for his fierce defense of controlling and suppressing Africans seems to be not least based on a fear for his own masculinity. Exercising white (male) power over Africans, which he compares to "the *absolute* authority of the Governor of the universe over the creation, and […] of parents over their children" (13, original emphasis), means holding the upper hand not only as a white person but also, and specifically, as a white *man*. By arguing that the "natural inhabitant of *Africa* [is] necessarily destitute of every mean of improvement in social virtue" (25, original emphasis) he expresses his fear of the alleged raw, uncivilized power of the black man that could threaten his own manliness. Hence, for Parsons, slavery indicates not only the superiority of the white over the black race but also, and particularly, the superiority of white over black masculinity. Pearson, on the contrary, represents the enlightened white man who does not harbor the primeval fear so inherent in his opponent.

4 More than two hundred years after its composition and presentation, *A Forensic Dispute* still arouses debate and thus sets itself apart from other commencement writings. The dialogue has only recently been reenacted by Harvard students in a short film called *No More, America*, which premiered at the Harvard Arts Museum on October 19, 2017. The film adds the "voice" of Phillis Wheatley, a then-enslaved poet who was—like Parsons and Pearson—twenty-one years old in 1773 ("*No More*" n.pag.). This project proves that *A Forensic Dispute* has lost nothing of its explosive nature.

Yale: Generational Conflict, Patriot Propaganda, and the Moral Question of Suicide

Issues of masculinity took center stage at Yale, too. Students at Yale were no less active in composing and presenting dialogues than their Harvard peers. In 1776, *Two Dialogues, On Different Subjects*, written by two unidentified students in their third year, were presented to the audience at the commencement act. What is exceptional about the first text, simply called "A Dialogue," is the fact that it has an actual plot containing what can be considered a surprising twist. The dialogue features two speakers bearing the telling names Blithe and Hunks, apparently middle-aged men who have an argument concerning their grown-up children. The two young playwrights/actors must have put themselves in the place of men some thirty years older than they were. Blithe's son wants to marry Hunks' daughter, so Blithe—on behalf of his son—asks Hunks for his approval. Hunks, however, responds that he dislikes Blithe's son and that he has already found another match for his daughter (7). Hunks wants his daughter to marry his cousin's son, solely because this young man is "Heir to a great Estate," owning a "Patrimony lying between two excellent Farms of [Hunks'], which are at least worth Two Thousand Pounds" (9). Real estate and money are the only qualities about his cousin's son that Hunks finds worth mentioning, and he readily admits that he intends to force his daughter into this marriage (10). The punishment for Hunks' greediness follows swiftly in the piece's twist: Blithe informs Hunks that the chosen bridegroom is already married and hands the baffled man a letter which confirms that the wedding has just taken place. What is more, it turns out that Hunks trusted his own brother with the process of passing on the deeds confirming ownership of the two farms to his daughter as soon as she would get married to the groom-elect (9). Hunks is then informed by Blithe that the deeds have only recently been given to his son, since Hunks' brother already knew that the cousin's son was married. "Yes," Blithe tells Hunks, "your Brother thought that my Son had an undoubted Title to them now, since his Cousin was married, and so he gave him up the next Day" (11). Hunks is furious and decides to abandon his daughter, who he thinks has been involved in the plan and wanted to escape the arranged marriage. Expelling his daughter is obviously not difficult for him, as his only true concern is the loss of his farms: his outcry "O! my Farms! what shall I do for my Farms!" (12) concludes the dialogue.

The moral of the story is as simple as it is obvious: greed will be punished. Yet, the dialogue has more to offer than scathing criticism against material-

ism and arranged marriage: it offers a heated discussion over generational differences. Hunks describes Blithe's son as "extremely wild and profuse" (5) and accuses him of leading a luxurious, extravagant life. Blithe defends his son, stating that "he appears genteel and fashionable among People, but he's in good Business, and lives above-board, and that's sufficient for any Man" (7). In his reply, Hunks leaves no doubt that he finds fashionable men suspicious, and he further attacks Blithe's son:

> 'Tis fashionable, I suppose, to powder and curl at the Barber's an Hour or two, before he visits his Mistress—to pay Six Pence or Eight Pence for brushing his Boots—to drink a Glass of Wine at every Tavern—to dine upon Fowls drest in the richest Manner:—And he must dirty two or three ruffled Shirts in the Journey. This is your genteel, fashionable way, is it? (8)

Hunks' sentiment echoes the idea of the "new man" at the time of the colonies' struggle to gain independence from Great Britain. An alternative concept to the flamboyant British gentleman, the "new man" represented the virtues of the new Republic and was characterized as "bold, rugged, aggressive, unafraid of fighting, and comfortable asserting himself" (Bronski 29). It is more than likely that the composers of the dialogue were patriots and believed in the idea of an independent America (especially since the second dialogue celebrates America and denounces Great Britain), but nonetheless wanted to show that masculinity was not necessarily characterized by coarseness and ruggedness, even though these character traits were considered the new American ideal. The character who defends young people and their behaviors and lifestyles triumphs over his ever-complaining opponent, who is clearly portrayed as a killjoy and a sore loser. As such, the performance of the dialogue before a full audience must have been a rather daring act, for Hunks' contempt for the way many young men lead their lives was in all probability shared by more than only a few spectators. It does not seem far-fetched to assume that the two students who composed the short play created the easy-going Blithe as their ideal of the elderly gentleman whose calmness and understanding of youth they wished could be found in more representatives of the older generation. Thus, the authors cleverly made use of a fictional character—a seemingly respectable man of a certain age—to defend their own lifestyles.

The second work in *Two Dialogues* is entitled "Dialogue, on the Success of our Arms, and the Rising Glory of AMERICA" and was written by the same two unidentified students. Performed one year after the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, it supports the colonies' ambition to become independent.

This support of the patriot cause comes as no surprise, since Yale was—like Harvard—among the "most active 'nurseries of republicanism'" (Tucker 17). In a fashion typical of patriot propaganda writings in those days, the dialogue slams Great Britain and praises America's war heroes. Composed in verse to underline the solemnity of what is being expressed, this work features two characters: Count Massilon, "a French Gentleman," and Narvon, "an American" (13). Massilon starts by praising America as a "happy land, where true religion dwells," to which he fled from his home country, France, "that barb'rous land" (15) characterized by "*tyranny*" exercised by "a Despot on the Gallic throne" (17, original emphasis). Massilon's remarks foreshadow the French Revolution starting thirteen years later; however, the situation in France is not discussed in further detail, and Massilon—throughout the dialogue—has little more to do than dropping cues for Narvon's scathing criticism of Britain and his impassionate praise for America. "But, pray inform me who the villains are, / That have been plotting to enslave your land?" (16) the Frenchman asks Narvon, who responds, "'Tis BRITAIN'S KING, leads on the bloody van, / Succeeded by a group of *venal slaves*, / All buried deep in *luxury*, and dead / To *honour*, dead to *reason, justice, faith*" (16, original emphasis). The cruelty of the British king is juxtaposed with the amiableness of George Washington:

> GREAT WASHINGTON, unequal'd in the fame
> Of prudence, wisdom, and superior worth;
> Heroic virtue, manly fortitude;
> Majestic mien, and graceful dignity.
> Yet never has the greatness of his soul
> Beam'd forth more radiant lustre, brighter shin'd,
> Than when appointed to the first command. (21)

Such worship of one of the quintessential heroes of the American pursuit of independence doubtlessly appealed to the vast majority of a New England audience. The dialogue bluntly depicts "strong" masculinity as an American virtue: Washington with his "manly fortitude" triumphs over the villainous British monarch. Moreover, the emphasis put on piety throughout the text and particularly at the end—the last words of the dialogue read "And earth united; shouts, 'MESSIAH REIGNS'" (31)—must have met with the approval of a society so deeply ingrained in religion. It almost seems as if the two young authors composed this expression of solemn patriotism as a kind of

compensation, a reward for the audience who had endured the first dialogue with its relatively daring message.

In 1797, one of the commencement exercises performed at Yale was entitled *The Suicide*. It was composed by student Thomas Day, then twenty years of age. Though called a "dialogue," this piece of work, however short, is clearly a proper stage play. It starts with a list of "Dramatis Personae" (4), a term not used before in college dialogues, and it is divided into three scenes, with changes of settings. Written and performed more than a decade after the victory of the former colonies over Britain in the War of Independence, this dialogue no longer deals with questions of the superiority of America over the "Old World." Instead, the play, written in free verse, raises the question whether committing suicide is an offense against the then oft-cited "laws of God." In the first scene, Abraham Bellamy talks to his friend Orvill about the problems he faces in his relationship with his son, Alphonso Bellamy. Abraham laments the disobedience of his son, who "with vile hand has squander'd / [Abraham's] hard-earned property upon his lusts" (5). It is time, Abraham states, to let his son "feel the folly of his conduct" (5). Orvill, reminiscent of Blithe in the 1776 dialogue, takes Alphonso's side:

> Your son is flighty, gay and thoughtless; warm
> In his affections, desperate in his courage;
> His heart is open, generous and sincere;
> But young, and unexperienced in the world,
> The falsly glittering charms of vice have caught
> His heedless soul, and like a wandering fire,
> Have drawn him from the straighter path of duty.
> For this, he claims your pity more than your
> Displeasure. (5)

Like the authors of the dialogue more than two decades earlier, Day defends men of his generation through the words of a fictional mature man. The message is clear: no one is completely evil, even if they make seemingly wrong decisions, and everyone deserves a second chance. Moreover, Orvill's remarks illustrate that young men stray from the right path not by choice but because they are vulnerable and fall prey to temptations. Orvill, similar to Blithe in the earlier piece, functions as a mouthpiece for young males who do not fit the description of the "new man." Putting these words of defense into a mature and undoubtedly respectable man's mouth most likely had a stronger impact on the audience than presenting a juvenile character speaking for himself would

have had. The play has a clear message: a father should understand that his male offspring is not necessarily cut from the same cloth as he is. Accordingly, Orvill recommends to Abraham that he let his son know he can forgive him, predicting that Alphonso's "soul will melt with gratitude, and call / Him, for his father's sake, to practice virtue" (6). Thereupon, Abraham softens his tone and promises to receive his son, once he realizes his own errors, with open arms. Orvill's defense of Alphonso's conduct in life did not fail to have the desired effect. The core of Orvill's message is that love and forgiveness can get a person back on the straight and narrow.

The second scene introduces Alphonso, who is just about to commit suicide. In a monologue he gives somewhat cryptic reasons for his decision to take his own life: he hates the world, he declares, because he has sold his reputation, and what remains of him "is bestial,—fit, and only fit / To perish from the sight of human eyes" (8). Orvill enters the room and succeeds in preventing the young man from shooting himself at the very last minute. Only now does Alphonso describe in more concrete terms what drove him to attempt suicide. He reveals that he started going astray when

> […] growing years
> Called me to enter a Collegiate life.
> Here a new aera, in my morals, opened.
> Lured on to vicious pleasures, by example,
> And their own novel relish, soon my conscience
> Asunder broke all moral ties.—A sense
> Of honor then alone restrained my hand
> And heart, from all that folly could devise,
> Or madness execute.—By nature formed
> With passions strong and ardent, was it strange
> The snaky charm of gaming should engross
> My unexperienced soul? (9)

Alphonso admits that he succumbed to the temptation of gambling. Rather than confessing to his own "guilt" of not resisting the lure of games of hazard, however, he blames the college environment for introducing him to the dangers of temptation. Such sentiment comes as a surprise, given that the play was performed during a commencement ceremony at Yale. However, the blame put on the college is somewhat mitigated by Alphonso's confession that his "nature," too, played a role in the development of his addiction.

Having lost his father's money and affection takes a heavy toll on Alphonso, who sees no sense in carrying on living "Banished from home, from all / The soft endearments of domestic life, / And doomed to hopeless poverty and shame" (10). It is thus questionable whether Alphonso genuinely regrets losing his father's money by gambling. His concerns appear to be somewhat more selfish: the prospects of being poor, forsaken by his family, and disrespected by society seem to be more discomforting to him than the thought of having gambled away his father's fortune. As such, the dialogue can be read as a critique of the notion that parents are no longer responsible for their offspring once they have entered college. What the play suggests is that parents have no "moral" right to send away their sons to college and afterwards blame their descendants for not living a virtuous life. Parents, the text suggests, should not act as if they were no longer responsible for the actions of their children once they sent them away to pursue their studies. After all, Alphonso claims that it is his "nature"—and thus, what was given to him by his antecedents—that made him take the wrong way. Young men, the dialogue tells its audience, are not the only ones to be held liable for their actions once they have been consigned to their own fate. It is particularly noteworthy that the dramatic piece explicitly points out that Alphonso's moral detour coincided with taking up his studies, since the dialogue was performed as part of a festive commencement act at one of the new nation's most respected colleges. Parents, the text implies, should not think that their offspring is safe at college, however strict the seminary may be led by the authorities. Day thus leaves no doubt that he thinks there can always be a certain "guilt" assigned to parents when their sons lose their way. *The Suicide*—similar to the 1776 Yale dialogue—attempts to defend the lifestyle of young men, however wrong it may appear at first glance.

Notwithstanding the message Alphonso tries to get across, the discussion between him, who still claims the right to kill himself ("Have not I / A right to quit this world, whene'er I please?" he asks [10]), and Orvill continues. "Shall not He who gave / Our lives," asks Orvill, "recall them in what manner best / Shall please Him?" (12), thus emphasizing the religious notion of suicide as an abominable sin. Orvill, now shifting from defending to criticizing Alphonso, points out that suicide is an act of "cowardice" and a form of high treason against God (13). Alphonso wittily counters Orvill's remarks and touches upon a controversial issue, arguing that if God alone has the right to end a life,

> The members of a nation have no right
> To grant their legislators power to take
> Their lives away, for capital offences.
> Hence every death, on criminals inflicted,
> Is so much barbarous tyranny and murder. (13)

Alphonso's criticism of capital punishment comes as a surprise, since it leaves no doubt that, at least when it comes to capital punishment, he believes that God's law stands above civil law. As such, his remarks can be read as a critique of the United States' legislation. Orvill dismisses Alphonso's objection by claiming that those sentenced to death lose their lives to "God alone," not to the members of a nation (14). "In every instance," Orvill continues, "Suicide is guilt" (14). However, Orvill's lengthy deliberations on the religious stance on suicide do not impress Alphonso, who replies that he cannot "wait / With patience nature's call" (14). It is only after Orvill notes that Abraham is willing to forgive him ("Thy father gladly would extend his arms, / And press thee to his heart, were he but sure / Thou wouldst reform" [16]) that Alphonso finally decides to stay alive (17). Alphonso's change of mind is by no means a concession to religion, it is solely based on the assurance that his father is inclined to condone his misconduct.

The short third and last scene begins with Abraham reading a letter in which Alphonso announces his suicide. Abraham thus deems his son dead and blames himself:

> Oh! hapless son! Oh! cruel, cruel father!
> Yes, *Orvill* told me true.—It is my own
> Unfeeling conduct, that hath caused, to him
> This dreadful death, these racking pangs to me.
> Wretch that I am! How could rebellious nature
> Permit me to reject my only son!
> How could my mischief-making head contrive
> The infernal plan! How could my flinty heart
> Consent to execute it! Oh, my son!
> My murdered son! (18, original emphasis)

Abraham's confession of guilt on his part illustrates the play's message: abandoning people who made mistakes can drive them to commit suicide. Generosity and the willingness to forgive, on the contrary, can save their lives and guide them back to the right way again. The play's message is at first glance

simple and trivial; still, the play is noteworthy for leveling criticism against the religiously motivated notion that suicide is, first and foremost, an offense against morality. Trying to persuade someone not to kill themselves on the ground of religion alone, the play demonstrates, is not sufficient.

Abraham's self-accusation is suddenly interrupted by the appearance of Orvill and Alphonso. For a moment, Abraham thinks he is confronted with a "shade of [his] departed son, / Sent while the blood is smoaking [sic] from his body" (19), but Orvill assures him that Alphonso is alive. Father and son are reunited and both confess their mistakes (20). This "happy ending" has been made possible through Abraham's insight and forgiveness, not through Orvill's moralizing attempts to make Alphonso feel guilty.

Conclusion: The Significance of Commencement Theatricals

The college commencement exercises in the latter half of the eighteenth century were not only significant to the participating students, but also to the population of the college towns and their surroundings. In a time of antitheatrical prejudice, these festive acts were highly popular, even though amusement was not their official purpose. The performance of dramatic dialogues, however, supplied entertainment, and the commencement acts in their entirety had all the ingredients of theatrical events: a stage, performers, and an audience. Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, visiting from Poland in 1798, paints a glowing picture of what these ceremonies meant to the locals. On the day of Harvard's public commencement in July 1798, he noted in his diary that

> the bridge was crowded with more people than on any single day of the whole year. Whoever had carriage, buggy or horse or could find one for hire, rode in to the famous *Commencement*. […] Beside the hackney carriages of the prim and sedate there were others full of negroes, negresses and little black imps. Everyone free, everyone dressed in a similar fashion. There were hackney carriages and cabriolets full of gay young ladies with gentlemen escorts, other young ladies strolled by on foot with their escorts. (qtd. in Budka 512, original emphasis)

Although he describes life in eighteenth-century Massachusetts in disturbingly romanticized terms, Niemcewicz's account shows that college commencements were a welcome change for the townspeople in the 1700s. The commencement performances were, as Johnson points out, "a continual

tradition" which "served to keep the idea of theater alive in the cultural imagination during the long absence of professional playing companies" (176). Thus, visits to commencement ceremonies to a certain degree substituted for the nearly impossible attendance of theater productions, and it is more than likely that many a dialogue prompted heated debates among the spectators.

Moreover, the dramatic dialogues and short plays performed at American colleges in the last quarter of the eighteenth century give evidence of multi-faceted notions of masculinity. While one of the protagonists of the Philadelphia dialogue shows a great deal of self-irony as he ridicules his own masculinity and evidently does not mind being mocked by his partner on the stage, the speaker in favor of slavery in Harvard's *Forensic Dispute* appears to be worried about his standing as a white man in power, should the purportedly "savage" black men be freed. One of the pieces presented at Yale contrasts British masculinity, exemplified by the British king and presented as deplorable, with American masculinity, which is praised as heroic and superior. Quite contrary to this display of unconditional praise, the other two plays performed at the same college ask for empathy with young men who meet considerable opposition because of their conduct in life. By depicting such an array of male figures, the dramatic works acted out as parts of the commencement ceremonies bear testimony to the ongoing negotiation of the idea of masculinity in America as the eighteenth century was drawing to a close.

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Liminal Spaces

Cross-Dressing, Monetary Transfers and Other Real and Imaginary Crossovers in Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*

Etti Gordon Ginzburg

Feminist readings of Susanna Rowson's 1794 play *Slaves in Algiers* have by now become a critical staple, one that is almost unquestioned. Marion Rust refers to the play's "incipient feminism" ("Activism" 237); Amelia Howe Kritzer maintains that the female characters in the play "fashion a collective definition of American womanhood that contests women's exclusion from the subordination within dominant formulations of American identity" (152); Patricia L. Parker describes the play as Rowson's "first feminist statement on stage" (68); and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon contends that the play "explicitly argues for the inclusion of women as rights-bearing subjects in the new nation" and describes it as "Rowson's attempt to transgender freedom" (407). Although Rust has already drawn attention to Rowson's "ability to appeal in a single play to potentially divergent points of view" ("Activism" 228), pointing out the play's inconsistencies on issues of race, identity, and foreign politics (i.e. a policy of ransom vs. military response), none of these tensions has destabilized the scholarly consensus regarding the play's inherent feminism.

Indeed, both the prologue and the epilogue include bold feminist statements from Rowson. Yet, even though she frames these statements in a way that makes her authorial intent clear enough, I intend to argue that the play itself fails to accomplish and solidify Rowson's ostensible aims. This position comes in distinction to Dillon, who has already observed this discrepancy ("[t]he language of equality that she invokes in framing the play seems at odds with the domestic norms of the comedy enacted in it" [410]), but does not see it as disqualifying. Instead, she suggests that it enhances the play's "less abstract, more personal, and more limited" (411) notions of liberty, and women's

liberation in particular. This approach, typical of criticism of the play, dismisses its inconsistencies by emphasizing the evidence of the prologue and the epilogue, which are strictly speaking no more than addendums to the play. In some cases, it could be assumed that such subversive material could only be expressed in the safety and subtlety of such a marginal position; in this instance, however, the explicitness of Rowson's comments renders this possibility unlikely. On the other hand, shifting attention from the margins to the center, that is, to the body of the play itself, can to a great extent undermine (though by no means cancel out) the strength of its feminist framework and, by implication, subversive effect.

Feminist readings that assign weight to these supplementary and hence seemingly liminal sections of the play are particularly challenged in view of (or, in my reversed perspective, when *framed by*) the liminal spaces in the play itself. Following Dillon's reading of the play as a liminal space of "transgender freedom" (407), the present chapter attempts to reconsider the play's feminist appeal by exploring its many such spaces.[1] Liminal spaces usually hold the inherent promise of a liberating potential, by involving forms of transgression across boundaries. Interestingly, however, a close reading of three such liminal actions in the play—transvestism, religious conversion, and monetary exchange—challenges rather than confirms *Slaves* as a nascent feminist text, and in fact tips the scale towards a more conservative reading of the play than is usually granted.

Arguably, what has thus far been taken for granted and read as "Rowson's powerful vindication of women's rights" (Gross 11) is in effect closer to the conservative concept of republican motherhood, famously coined by Linda K. Kerber, according to which political significance is embedded in the traditional maternal role, defining women's civic identity as contingent on their domestic function. In other words, and unlike Kritzer's "Playing with Republican Motherhood," which maintains that Rowson fulfills her feminist claims and endows the female characters with effective political strength, I argue

1 Liminality implies ambiguity, a blend of low and high, and situations that are "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner 94). Victor W. Turner further suggests that liminality refers to people or situations that cannot be categorized according to traditional criteria of classification, and are on the margins (94-130).

that the play offers no real subversive interpretation of the concept but rather maintains its traditional understanding.[2]

Although Rowson's protagonists are powerful women, with the middle-aged Rebecca's leading role a rarity that deserves Kritzer's commendable emphasis (153-54), the power they wield is after all directed at performing their familial roles as daughters, wives, or mothers (biological or spiritual; in effect or potentially). Moreover, it is important to remember that the women exercise their strengths only in a foreign land and in the context of captivity, where even their femininity recedes in the face of their American superiority vis-à-vis their barbarous captors. Outside of this framework, on the other hand, the American women "maintain checks on their own behavior" (Kritzer 158); they do not take advantage of their newly gained competences, and they do not attempt to transcend the gendered power relations with their male *American* relations. Fetnah, the only woman who endeavors to do so, is significantly not an American, and Rowson makes sure that she will never become one. Thus, rather than imbue these scenes with feminist content, Rowson's conservative treatment seems to invalidate their revolutionary potential and weaken the play's bid to be read as a feminist text.

Accordingly, I will examine the play's use of cross-dressing, religious conversion, and monetary exchange in an attempt to highlight the traditionalist, rather than feminist, tendencies of its gender politics. Contrary to Dillon's contention that Rowson argues "for the public and political, rather than private and domestic, role of women" (410), I will claim that the play's use of traditionally feminine attributes and concepts, and the discourse of safety in particular, renders it no more than another traditional version, Rowson's version, of republican motherhood.

Cross-Dressing

Cross-dressing, which has featured in many situations of real captivity (Sorensen 179), is a natural component of this kind of story and in line with the play's comic spirit and the exotic background of Moorish Algiers.

2 Kerber described republican motherhood as "Janus-faced" (485), acknowledging the fact that although the idea of republican motherhood made room for questioning hierarchies "within the family and outside it," it more often played a conservative role, "deflecting the radical potential of the revolutionary experience" (484-85).

It would also, theoretically, be an interesting reflection of the liminal and indeterminate circumstances of captivity. However, the only two characters that cross-dress in the play are Ben Hassan and his daughter Fetnah; in other words, the American captives do not partake in the practice.

Considering the hybrid nature of transvestism and its traditional association with contamination (through costumes), this may come as no surprise. Rowson's Americans are, despite their dire situation, in no psychological state of liminality, which their hypothetical cross-dressing would have otherwise highlighted; rather, they are emblems of resilience and stable identity: "There is transculturation of the captor, but Anglo-American captives' sense of their identity remains unchallenged" (Sorensen 173). On the other hand, both Hassan and Fetnah are of hybrid identity, former English Jews who converted to Islam and moved to Algiers. Hence, they are "tarnish[ed]" (72), to use the word Rebecca employs to refer to apostasy, and their transvestism confirms rather than disrupts their mixed, unstable positions. Lise Sorensen concludes that "Rowson thus places racial identity center stage in a play that explores the virtues of freedom" (175). Like Sorensen (and others), Dillon also emphasizes the racial aspect of this steadfast, Anglo-American identity when she writes that "Rebecca is not defending herself against a corruption by an Anglo-American rake but against a racialized, un-American miscreant" (415). This particular use of cross-dressing may thus explain why transvestism fails to disrupt or reshape gender relations and hierarchy in the play.

Although neither the transvestism of Hassan nor that of Fetnah has a subversive or challenging function within the action of Slaves, there are nevertheless important differences between them. As a rule, male and female acts of cross-dressing have been understood differently. For one thing, male transvestism is seen as far more culturally significant, its conspicuous image inherently bolstering the conservative pecking order. As Alisa Solomon argues, "to make male-to-female drag the point from which all discussion of cross-dressing follows simply reinstates the presumption of the male as universal" (qtd. in Ferris 6). This is because for a man to dress as a woman undermines his virility and masculine authority, placing him "in a position of shame" (Howard 25). The subsequently comic effect of male-to-female transformation thus relies on the prejudice against women as inferior to men and in this way reinforces the extant sexual hierarchy.

Accordingly, Hassan's transvestism suggests that he is predisposed to effeminacy, an androgyne rather than an "ordinary" male. His effeminate inclinations are indeed evident in his everyday conduct, for example, in his anx-

ious response to danger (no manly behavior), which echoes Rebecca's reaction to the point of repeating it verbatim, though significantly without Rebecca's appeal to "heavens":

> REBECCA: Oh heavens! What will become of me?
> BEN HASSAN: What will become of me? (56)

Once dressed as a woman, Hassan's ungrammatical and heavily accented language becomes surprisingly articulate and almost dialect-free. He also expresses a (feminine) longing for safety: "I wish I was in any safe place" (62), a motif which he shares with the American women in the play and which further attests to his proximity to the feminine.

However, while his cross-dressing is inflected by the conventional gender hierarchy, Hassan's masculinity retains a presence in the story, as seen in other responses to him and his disguise. On the one hand, Sebastian, the Spanish slave, does not recognize Hassan's masculinity, taking him for an old woman even after the latter's veil falls. The American Henry, on the other hand, recognizes Hassan even without the latter taking off the dress (73; at least, there is no indication in the play that Hassan has done so).[3] These opposite responses indicate an androgynous rather than wholly feminized nature; he can pass for both man and woman, being both. In Hassan's cross-dressing, paradoxically, the dual nature that you see is also what you get.

In principle, androgyny presents a challenge to the notion of a "true" sexual identity, exposing the culturally imposed nature of gender, and "undercut[ting] the power relations that inform and are informed by gender" (Long 187-88).[4] In the case of Hassan, however, this potential disruption of gender hierarchy, and by extension of the prevalent social order, is less subversive than it would be if not for Hassan's portraiture as the play's ultimate villain. Hassan's androgynous nature is an external manifestation of his notorious

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3 Henry demonstrates a capacity to see beyond both Hassan's and Fetnah's disguises and identify the true nature of each, a capacity that Sebastian and the other slaves do not share and that may be informed by (or conversely signal) his white, bourgeois (class) superiority (Rust, "Activism" 234).

4 Androgyny could also, and oftentimes did, represent a desire for spiritual wholeness. In fact, it has carried such positive connotations (regardless of biological representations) since classical Greece. Judeo-Christian mystical interpretations of the first Adam (before the Fall) as a harmonious and innocent androgyne were influential in this respect, and affected ensuing Romantic notions of the unity of mankind (Busst 61-62).

moral, ethnic and religious hybridity and a sign of his contaminated, "tarnished" body; his hyperbolic and farcical feminization becomes a sign of his deficient and inconsistent character. It is no wonder that he can transform genders as easily and as unscrupulously as he shifts from any one of his identities to the other. Ironically, only the malleable Hassan does not convert to Americanness at the end of the play. This is not because he cannot, but rather because he so easily can, and so he is pronounced ineligible by Rebecca, America's most constant (but also white, "ladylike," and virtuously Christian) gatekeeper.

Rather than destabilizing heteronormative conventions and disrupting the existing order of things, Hassan's transvestism replicates and in fact reinforces the male-female-dichotomy. His rejection of the "two-sex-model" is rejected in turn, restoring a status quo in which "there are two stable, incommensurable, opposite sexes and that the political, economic, and cultural lives of men and women, their gender roles, are somehow based on these 'facts'" (Laqueur 6). Instead of relaxing gender boundaries, Hassan's cross-dressing becomes a symbol of the menace of hybridity as a major threat to Rowson's "ascriptive" definition of identity (Dillon 408) and reveals her deep concern with American identity rather than with its gendered nuances.

Fetnah's transvestism is both similar and intriguingly different from that of her father. It is similar in that Fetnah, too, is unable to disguise utterly her "true" gender identity. It is different in that this "true" identity is not as ambiguous as that of her father. For one, Fetnah cross-dresses as a *boy* rather than as an adult man; the stage instructions read: "Re-enter Sebastian, forcing in Fetnah habited like a *boy*" (49, my emphasis). Secondly, Fetnah dresses as a boy for a legitimate purpose, that of gaining her liberty.[5] Throughout the scene, which is significantly brief (50-51), the American Henry refers to the disguised Fetnah as "this *innocent youth*" and as "*young, innocent, and unprotected*" (50, my emphasis). When the other slaves do not share Henry's view and attempt to kill the veiled Fetnah, she immediately reveals herself as "*poor little* Fetnah" (50, my emphasis), echoing Henry's diminutive description.[6] It is clear that

5 See by comparison the American Ellinor in Sarah Pogson's 1818 play *The Young Carolinians,* who disguises herself for the same purpose, despite her Anglo-American ("pure breed" or non-hybrid) identity.

6 It is interesting to note that Frederic uses the adjective "little" when addressing Fetnah's father, Hassan ("my little Israelite" [22]), as well as Fetnah ("my sweet little infidel" [39]). Heather S. Nathans points out how such labels ("Israelite" and "little") have

Fetnah's transvestism does not serve to underscore any innate (and inappropriately) masculine assertiveness or destabilize her femininity, but rather to enhance the latter. Unlike her father, her stable gender identity allows her to be an object of respect. Rowson does render Fetnah's femininity too assertive in other ways, however (as I will show in more detail later on), and must therefore contain her; this is the explanation I will offer for Rowson's decision not to let her complete her national and religious transformation, marry Frederic and leave Algiers at the end of the play.

Monetary Exchange and Transfer

Monetary exchange, like transvestism, entails transmission or conversion. It implies liminality, or the potential to complicate the boundaries between those with and those without this form of power. Indeed, Hassan's cross-dressing is directly linked to the transfer of money and the loss of power that marks the beginning of his end. It is significant that the instant Hassan cross-dresses as a woman, he loses control of the ransom bills (which could have otherwise saved him); whereas the first act exposes Hassan's unstable masculinity, the monetary loss reinforces it by putting him on an equal footing with women. Deprived of his monetary might, the effeminate Hassan becomes as helpless as the formerly enslaved Rebecca. It is not accidental that the plot is resolved and the slaves are released at the same time the ransom money reaches the right hands and can buy the captives' liberty (as historically it usually did), reminding readers that the Barbary crisis was, in essence, an economic struggle over trade and shipping rights (Baepler 219).

This method of attaining freedom aligns monetary transmission with the political transmission of liberty (Warner 104), representing the latter as a comparable exercise of power. Transmission is a form of interaction that assumes mediation, distance, and deferment, that transforms what is transported; it comes in contrast to communication, which "aspires to overcome differences of space and time" (Warner 103; see also Debray).[7] Drawing on this distinc-

become ingrained in the Anglo-American vernacular to underscore the "diminished, outsider status" (23) of Jews in America.

7 William Warner relies on Regis Debray's distinction between communication and transmission, according to which "transmission assumes that distance and deferral […] become part of the transmission" (Warner 103). Transmission involves a unilateral, collective and hierarchical transference of highly cherished values and is therefore also

tion, Rowson's insistence on the validity of the monetary transfer implies that she believes in a rather straightforward model of transmission, instead of a more egalitarian communication, of liberty. This is also implied by the ending of the play, which maintains the geographical separation between the Americans and the converted Algerians. The implication here is that Rowson has no interest in genuine communication with the Algerians even once they have been transformed. Liberty is not a value that is discussed and communicated by egalitarian means. High on the American list of values, liberty is not negotiable, but has to be transmitted as is, by monetary (or militaristic) methods. Rowson's colonialist approach is echoed in the words that seal the play: "[M]ay Freedom spread her benign influence thro' every nation, till the bright Eagle, united with the dove and olive-branch, waves high, the acknowledged standard of the world" (75).

In general, money, which is conventionally earned and negotiated by men, plays a major role in the play as a masculine form of force, similar to the military mutiny that eventually enables the captives' release. Indeed, the association between money and military power is consistent with Rowson's view of the solution to the actual Algerian crisis. Rowson maintained that Americans should pay their way back to freedom: "Each hand must give, and the quick sail unfurl'd, / Must bear their ransom to the distant world" (8). While Rowson believed that America "should cede to the monetary demands of the Barbary states," as Rust expounds, she also made sure to include a successful captive rebellion in the play because she understood the importance of a "militaristic perspective, which held that without a navy to back up the terms of any agreements between the United States and the North African governments, ransom wouldn't work" ("Activism" 228). Accordingly, the role that money plays in the drama implicitly undermines the effect of the women's speeches and reveals them for what they really are: rhetorical *supplements* to the more effective masculine activities. The influence of the American women's most dramatic speeches is consistently connected to other monetary and military developments; it is highly significant, for example, that even if fueled by Rebecca's idealistic speech, the Dey's conversion to democracy eventually takes place under military pressure.

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collective and political. Communication, in contrast, engages in egalitarian negotiations and implies communality and unity: "[C]ultural transmission begins where interpersonal communication ends" (Debray 98).

Hence, it is a signifier of superior character and advanced intelligence to comprehend the practical power of money, which Rowson endows with a particularly conservative agenda, once again upholding white, American superiority. When Zoriana, the Dey's daughter, expresses her wish to give her gold and jewelry to ransom Henry, she in fact enacts her conversion from an infidel who conceives of wealth as "commodity fetishism" (Conway 673) to a Christian who possesses a more advanced, abstract understanding of the use-value of money: "[H]ere is more gold and jewels. I never knew their value, till I found they could ransom you" (35). Joe Conway observes that anti-monetary and iconoclastic tendencies are common to utopian literature (671) and quotes Richard Halpern on Thomas More's *Utopia*: "[R]itual debasement of gold is in some ways *the* quintessential Utopia act"; it institutes "the ascendancy of use value over exchange value" (Halpern 145, qtd. in Conway 671, original emphasis). Thus, in endowing money with idealism, Zoriana becomes the mouthpiece of a utopian view, according to which money and valuables are used (use-value) for a nobler, more abstract purpose. Zoriana's apprehension of the use-value of her possessions implies her overcoming her heathenish (here, Algerian) conceptions and is indicative of her genuine conversion to Christianity and enlightened Americanness.[8]

The Dey similarly exhibits signs of an advanced understanding of the use-value of money when he refuses to ransom Olivia:

> Woman, the wealth of Golconda could not pay her ransom—can you imagine that I, whose slave she is; I, who could force her obedience to my will, and yet gave life and freedom to those Christians, to purchase her compliance, would now relinquish her for paltry gold; contemptible idea. (68)

The Dey's budding monetary understanding and Zoriana's Christian altruism are signs of the cultural maturity of the two; they also foreshadow the mass coming-of-age of all Algerians at the end of the play and mark the latter's move away from philistine, fetishistic tendencies traditionally perceived as characterizing savage cultures and towards what Conway describes as "the iconoclastic tendencies of Anglo-Protestant modernity" (674).

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8 By comparison, once the ransom money is restored to Rebecca, she immediately acknowledges its use value and plans to use it to release her son and cheer many other "children of affliction": "[H]ere's a letter addressed to me—the money is my own—Oh joy beyond expression! My child will soon be free. I have also *the means* of cheering many children of affliction, with the blest sound of liberty" (59, my emphasis).

Religious and Ideological Conversion

Conversion is a familiar trope of the transformation of identity in comedy, one that in fact serves "as a malleable trope for inconstancy […] not so much an act of faith, but a conversion of value that is grammatically convenient and reflects unstable, often fuzzy, boundaries of ethnic, racial and sexual identities" (Sicher 273). Accordingly, conversion is used in *Slaves* to dissociate Hassan from the constancy that is the hallmark of the steadfast Rebecca Constant, the ultimate American woman. Furthermore, Hassan's untrustworthy transvestism is also closely aligned with his conversion from Judaism to Islam. Rowson's representation of Hassan's inconstancy and infidelity seems to reflect a traditional unease about the Jewish body and conveys a sense that his infidelity is inherent rather than convertible: "However much the Jew may satanically disguise himself, he remains internally unchangeable, and thus would be unconvertible" (Sicher 275; see also Nathans 178-79). Not only is conversion itself suspect, but Jewish conversion is doubly so. This rejection of Jewish conversion is notably incompatible within the context of a play that promotes the conversion to American identity.

Rowson's *Slaves* is considered the first American play to feature Jewish characters (Liptzin 24; Harap 205);[9] however, this depiction overlooks the complexity of Hassan and Fetnah's religious identity. In this play, both father

9 Jewish characters also feature in later dramas of captivity that were written between 1794 and 1823 and that dealt with the Barbary theme. Louis Harap lists *Slaves* as one of six American plays written between 1794 and 1823 with Jewish characters. As in Rowson's play, none of the Jewish characters in these plays is American, and all the plays take place in foreign locales. The other plays are: William Dunlap's *Bonaparte in England* (1803), James Ellison's *American Captive* (1812), John Howard Payne's *Trial Without Jury* (1815) (an adaptation from a French drama), Mary Carr Clarke's *Benevolent Lawyer* (1823), and Jonathan Smith's *The Siege of Algiers* (1823) (Harap 204). Smith's *The Siege of Algiers* is exceptional in its positive portrayal of the Jewish character, but was never performed. In all these captivity plays, Jews are seen to handle money, possibly due to their historical role as bankers in the Barbary States. It was in this role that they probably negotiated with American representatives to free captive Americans and ships (Harap 205). But their negative portraiture in the captivity plays is also strongly influenced by the British tradition of the stage Jew, a stereotypical and anti-Semitic stock figure who, like Hassan, speaks ungrammatically and in dialect, and is greedy, miserly and treacherous (Harap 204-19). Similar portraitures of Jews can be found in other captivity novels such as Royall Tyler's 1797 *The Algerine Captive* or Peter Markoe's 1787 *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* (Gross 2).

and daughter have converted to Islam, bear typical Algerian names and are in effect Muslims. Indeed, when Hassan tries to convince the already wedded Rebecca to marry him, he relies on the Muslim law allowing polygamy rather than on Jewish law, which prohibits it: "Ish, but our law gives us great many wives—our law gives liberty in love" (21). Nevertheless, Rowson chooses to ignore Hassan's conversion altogether and bases his character on the stock figure of the stage Jew; her modern critics follow suit. This rejection (of Hassan's conversion to Islam) contradicts the idea of American identity as choice and compromises Rowson's claim for the universality of liberty (Jews are inconvertible).[10]

Moreover, the Barbary struggle, although economic in essence, was framed, at least in Europe, as a fight between "Christian knights and Islamic pirates" and mostly represented "the centuries-old ideological schism between Christianity and Islam" (Baepler 219). In a play that is historically grounded in the Barbary crisis of 1776-1815, and which features the drama of American captives in the hands of *Barbary* corsairs, it is thus all the more notable that the main villain is a British-Algerian, Muslim-Jew.[11] The mighty Algerian-Muslim Dey, for example, would have formed a more reliable representation of a Barbary captor. Alternatively, why not turn Hassan into a North African Jew, which would also be more historically accurate? The fact of Hassan's Judaism becomes even more far-fetched when considering that

10 The notion of identity as choice and the universality of liberty have been often emphasized in readings of Rowson's play. Rust, for example, writes that "America, it seems, was a state of mind. If one thought like one (cherishing benevolence, loving liberty)—as even the Moors in her play came to do—one was one. This was the message of Rowson's play, in which all but one character ends up swayed by the captives' point of view" ("Activism" 230). And yet, Rowson's depiction of conversion, particularly Jewish conversion, thoroughly undermines this message in favor of upholding racial boundaries.

11 Rowson's choice of topic was certainly political. With the 1783 Treaty of Paris, British protection of American shipping interests was discontinued, and a series of attacks by Barbary pirates on American ships in the Mediterranean soon followed. Ransom money demanded by the Barbary states and paid by the U.S. government did not solve the problem, and between 1784 and 1815 many American ships and more than 400 American sailors were captured as the American government wavered between monetary and military solutions (Rust, *Prodigal* 214-15). As mentioned before, Rowson does not favor either of these options and presents them both in her play: Ransom money is solicited as a rebellion is taking place.

at least officially, there had been no Jews in England, where Hassan and his daughter allegedly come from, since their expulsion in 1290.[12]

While both Jews and Moors were perceived as Other, their otherness was—significantly—not of the same type. Jews aroused suspicion "because they embodied a cultural and racial difference that was impermeable to conversion" (Sicher 274), because they were not confined to one country, not to mention that they were held responsible for Christ's crucifixion. Jews also symbolized a monetary corruption (Gross 2) that, unlike the Moors, ruled them out as possible partners for commerce. The Barbary corsairs, in contrast, were enemies marked by inferiority and menace but not instability (Gross 8). Indeed, in Rowson's play, the indigenous Muslim-Algerians are not as inherently tarnished and threatening as the former British-turned-Algerian Muslim-Jew Hassan, whose inconstant, corrupt, and nomadic nature seems to pose the greatest risk to American identity.

It is also possible, however, that Rowson, who was born in England, was influenced by the fact that many Americans believed that Britain actually supported Barbary piracy as a response to America's successful revolt (Margulis and Poremski ix). Featuring Hassan as originally British acknowledges this circumstance, while the emphasis on his Judaism conveniently renders his British origin relatively negligible.

Jewish daughters were, generally, not viewed as equally damnable and irredeemable as their male fathers but were instead held "beautiful and eligible for conversion" (Sicher 276).[13] Their racial differences could be overcome through spiritual conversion and marriage, as in the case of Jessica, Shylock's Jewish daughter in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Rowson, however, replicates Efraim Sicher's paradigm of the conflicted wicked Jewish father and his beautiful daughter only partially: Although Fetnah is eligible for conversion, Rowson does not enable her to fully realize her new religious

12 According to Paul Baepler, Christian Barbary corsairs were no rarity: "Christian renegades commanded two-thirds of the seventeenth-century corsair flotilla" (225). At the same time, featuring the Jewish Hassan rather than the Muslim Dey as the main rogue of the play complicates claims in the spirit of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which posits Islam in terms of a universal Other, such as Baepler's own thesis about the role of the captivity genre in molding North African Muslims into America's "diabolical foil" (239; see also Richards 155).

13 This may have to do with the fact that in Christian society, lineage is determined by men, whereas in Judaism it is the mother who determines the child's religious (Jewish) identity.

identity and marry Frederic, let alone physically cross over to America. After all, as both an infidel *and* a Muslim Jew, Fetnah is twice tarnished and thus her mixed genealogy poses a threat to "the gene pool of the new Republic" (Sorensen 175).

In another sense, however, Fetnah's enduring religious and ethnic alterity is evident in the way that she is at least spared the tragic death of her British-American predecessor, Charlotte Temple. I contend that Fetnah remains in Algiers in part because she is also irrevocably sexually tarnished.[14] It is Fetnah's own brazen description of the Dey's love-making that attests to her breached chastity: "[W]hen he makes love, he looks so grave and stately, that I declare, if it was not for fear of his huge sceymetar, I shou'd burst out a laughing in his face" (14). Like Charlotte, this description is enough to convict Fetnah and seal her fate; unlike Charlotte, she is not expected to conform to the Christian standards of Anglo-American women and is therefore allowed to live. She is nevertheless destined for geographical confinement, a telling fate in a play that aligns liberty with geography: "[M]ust a boy born in Columbia, claiming liberty as his birth-right, pass all his days in slavery" (18).[15]

Similarly, all Algerians who convert to "Americanism" remain at a safe distance from American soil. Although the conversion of the Moors seems to support the idea that it is enough to believe in liberty to assume an American identity, the play's all too convenient solution to the potential mass immigration of the "new" Americans in fact undermines the abstract notion of American identity. In other words, the very act of conversion is equivalent to inconstancy and implies a "tarnished" entity. Thus, both the twice-converted Fetnah (who has transferred her allegiance first to Islam and then to liberty), and the once-converted Moors (who have pledged themselves only to liberty and who are therefore somewhat less tarnished in this weird hierarchy of hybridity), are inevitably flawed by the very, and only, act that could redeem them. Consequently, neither is fully eligible for American identity. Pointing at

14 By comparison, the more fortunate character Melissa, of Rowson's lost play *The Americans in England*, is spared not only because she is an American and a Christian, but not least because she is not "tarnished" and has somehow maintained her purity (Rust "Activism" 247).

15 Eileen Elrod, by comparison, suggests that Fetnah (as well as Semira and Olivia) "provide a dramatic contrast" to Charlotte's "innocence […] fatal passivity" and "weakness" (169).

the play's "anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant components," Margolis and Poremski add that "Rowson believed, like others of her time, that the influx of Jews and other non-Anglo immigrants could only weaken the United States" (xxv).

The Discourse of Safety

Still, I would like to suggest that neither Fetnah's Jewish identity nor her sexually tarnished body is the main reason she is sacrificed in the name of filial duty, remaining in Algiers with her biological father, whose humanity is doubted throughout the play, instead of uniting with her surrogate ideological mother Rebecca. Rather, it is mainly because unlike Rebecca and Olivia, Fetnah is not only "an *emblem* of *female* liberty" (Rust, *Prodigal* 231, my emphasis), but a potent feminist activist who can effectually (not only declaratively) threaten the political balance of gender power in America. Eileen Elrod has argued that "Fetnah's remarkable agency includes defiance of sexual stereotypes" because she is "[u]nintimidated by the Dey's official sexual power over her" (169). But then, Fetnah seems to be unintimidated by all men. Before cross-dressing as a male (boy), she advises Selima, one of the Dey's harem women: "Pshaw! You're so fearful of his anger, if you let the men see you are afraid of them, they will hector and domineer finely, no, no, let them think you don't care whether they are pleased or no, and then they'll be as condescending and humble" (47). This counsel is typical of Fetnah, who advocates for liberty from the very start: "I don't like to be confined" and "I wish for liberty" (13), she announces at the outset of the play. Although we are told that she has learned those lessons from Rebecca—"[Rebecca] taught me, woman was never formed to be the abject slave of man. Nature made us equal with them, and gave us the power to render ourselves superior" (16)—she is in fact the first and only woman in the play to express and apply them to gender relations with such unequivocal (and straightforward) conviction. As has already been mentioned, the only other places where similar feminist statements are made with similar gusto are, significantly external to the play, the prologue, and the epilogue, where Rowson as herself famously declares: "'Women were born for universal sway; / Men to adore, be silent and obey'" (77). But Rowson is careful not to bestow this liberty on any of her fictional American ladies inside the play itself.

Fetnah's liberal ideas, moreover, are never checked, contained, or rendered impotent by bourgeois manners. Rebecca, by comparison, continually main-

tains a bourgeois appeal of small talk and polite conversation, even while engaging in her own form of protest. For example, rather than challenging or confronting the treacherous Hassan outright, Rebecca responds to his offer to be her "very good friend" (19) as if it is genuine, made in good faith (an answer strikingly mismatched in this situation): "Thank you, Hassan, but if you are in reality the friend you profess to be, leave me to indulge my grief in solitude, your intention is kind, but I would rather be alone" (19); similarly, she politely acknowledges his false kindness for not sending her to the slave market or the Dey's harem and apologizes for her current inability to offer ransom: "That is indeed true, but I cannot at present return your kindness" (20). Rebecca also weeps, performing her femininity, upon hearing that she might stay confined for life: "Alas! I am very wretched," she says, with the stage directions simply stating "weeps" (20). Fetnah may be afraid of the Dey or disgusted by him, but she speaks her mind in a straightforward manner—"What of that, I don't love him" (15)—and she does not cry.

In general, Rebecca's advocacy is less vocal and more contained than Fetnah's and is marked by the discourse of safety, in keeping with the feminine model of separate spheres. Confined to Hassan's abode, Rebecca reads a poem whose lines, "[t]he soul, secure in its existence" (18), quietly serve to express her protest and resilience. Although Kritzer praises Rowson's choice of intellectual activity for Rebecca (that is, not the traditional needlework), in a way, reading the poem keeps Rebecca respectfully silent. When Rebecca eventually speaks, her speech is not entirely her own but echoes those very lines: "[H]owever sunk in adversity, *the soul secure in its own integrity* will rise superior to its enemies" (21-22, my emphasis). Earlier in the text, Rebecca also describes how hope and "intellectual heavenly fire" help her "soar above this mortal world, and all its pains or pleasures" (18). Rebecca's words suggest her success in securing for herself an invisible separate sphere that protects her. The use of the word "secure" in this context evokes the security of a home away from home. She advocates for the paradigm of such separate spheres by demonstrating both how it can be maintained even under the dire circumstances of captivity, and the value it imparts.

Rebecca thus generates a sense that a separate sphere—of a "soul secure in its own integrity" (22)—is the only effective means to shun danger. In contrast to Dillon, who argues that Rowson sees no political relevance in the distinction between public and private, I suggest that the play's discourse actually maintains it. Although Hassan leaves Rebecca alone after her speech, this is not so much due to her political discourse, as Dillon asserts, but rather owing

to Rebecca's traditionally feminine qualities. Hassan's response aptly demonstrates this in his aside (his comic dialect relatively suspended, probably a sign of respect to the gentle and genteel subject of his speech): "'Tis a very strange woman, very strange indeed; she does not know I got her pocket book, with bills of exchange in it; she thinks I keep her in my house out of charity, and yet she talks about freedom and superiority, as if she was in her own country" (22). Hassan seems more charmingly perplexed by Rebecca's naiveté than impressed by her fervent idealism. Apparently, a woman's feminine qualities still seem to be her most effective resource. Similarly, Olivia's power to affect the Dey depends not so much on her bravery as on her feminine qualities: "How her softness melts me" (65) asides the Dey, very much like Hassan before him, upon hearing Olivia's plea to release her father and fiancé.[16]

Perhaps nowhere is Rebecca's adherence to her proper feminine place more evident than when she and her son Augustus escape danger, and the boy, already familiar with the conventions of gender roles, takes on the part of the male protector: "Don't be frightened, mother, thro' this door is a way into the garden; if I had but a sword, boy as I am, I'd fight for you till I died" (56). His mother, although the adult of the two, does not contest his lead and obediently follows. Rebecca conveniently yields to the traditional division of gender roles when under the guidance of an American male, even if only a boy.

Fetnah, by contrast, does not seem to share Rebecca's notion of feminine security (whether spiritual or physical), perhaps because unlike American women, she has never been indoctrinated by it. When Frederic wants to bring Fetnah to a safe place, that is, to put her in her proper place as a woman ("You, my dear Fetnah, I will place in an inner part of the grotto, where you will be safe" [52]), her response is nothing like Rebecca's polite yet circular speech, as she passionately protests: "What, shut me up!—Do you take me for a coward?" (52). When Henry explains: "We respect you as a woman, and would shield you from danger" (52), Fetnah assertively retorts: "A woman!—Why, so

16 Indeed, as noted earlier in the discussion of monetary and military power, the effect of Rebecca's fervent and principled speech towards the end of the play—"for never shall Olivia, a daughter of Columbia, and a Christian, tarnish her name by apostasy, or live the slave of a despotic tyrant" (72)—cannot be viewed outside the broader context of the slaves' rebellion. The Dey converts to democracy only under military pressure (even if also fueled by Rebecca's idealism), and his alteration is inexplicably swift and complete, as befits a comedy. Similarly, the Dey does not understand the content of Fetnah's discourse of liberty and dismisses it as (her) "childish caprice" (41).

I am; but in the cause of love and friendship, a woman can face danger with as much spirit, and as little fear, as the bravest man among you.—Do you lead the way; I'll follow to the end" (52). Fetnah's rejection of Frederic's protection distinguishes her not only from Rebecca but also from Jessica, who is rescued by Lorenzo in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice.* Unlike Jessica and Rebecca, Fetnah dictates a relationship that rejects the role of men as protectors.

The American men gallantly yield to Fetnah's spirited speech, but it is nevertheless condemned by the lewd Sebastian. Sebastian's low-class stature positions him on a par with Fetnah and thus qualifies him to oppose and mock her, highlighting the sexual effect of her speech: "Bravo! Excellent! Bravissimo!—Why, 'tis a little body; but, ecod, she's a devil of a spirit.—It's a fine thing to meet with a woman that has a little fire in her composition. I never much liked your milk-and-water ladies" (52). Sebastian's approach further intensifies Fetnah's profound alterity vis-à-vis the play's American "milk-and-water ladies." None of the American women in the play is ever referred to in such vulgar terms, let alone Rebecca, who receives an entirely different verbal treatment from Sebastian, who describes her as "a most lovely, amiable creature, whom we must accost with respect, and convey hence in *safety*—she is a woman of family and fortune" (57, my emphasis).

Unlike Fetnah, after all, Rebecca, as we have seen, speaks in a proper, ladylike manner and uses appropriately feminine gestures that seem to safeguard her chastity and keep harm at bay. Even when confronting the Dey, Rebecca bravely voices her essentialist credo not with belligerence but rather with melodramatic pathos. Her declaration of identity is no declaration of feminist independence: "[F]or never shall Olivia, a daughter of Columbia, and a Christian, tarnish her name by apostasy, or live the slave of a despotic tyrant" (72). She uses similar pathos in response to Hassan's sexual advancements: "Hold, Hassan; prostitute not the sacred word by applying it to licentiousness; the sons and daughters of liberty, take justice, truth, and mercy, for their leaders, when they list under her glorious banners" (21). The speech emphasizes religious and ethnic purity but does not address freedom in contexts that are not despotic, let alone Christian. More specifically, hers is not a feminist argument either. Nowhere does Rebecca protest Hassan or the Dey not as a Christian but as a woman: "By the Christian law, no man should be a slave" (73), she says to the Dey. Fetnah, by contrast, is far more candid and direct in applying those principles to her situation: "[B]estow your favor on some other, who may think splendor a compensation for the loss of liberty" (16). Fetnah

alone speaks on behalf of women as such: "a woman can face danger with as much spirit […] as the bravest man among you" (52).

Rowson's Republican Motherhood: *Slaves in Algiers*'s Feminism Reconsidered

Finally, it seems that Rebecca and Olivia are consistently motivated by their innate Christian sentiment and maternal and filial duties.[17] That is to say, for Rebecca and Olivia, the struggle for liberty is entwined with, even motivated by, their Christian duties as mother and daughter from the outset of the play. Rebecca contemplates her son's fate as a slave (18) and declares that "for his sake I have endured life" (70); when she gets hold of her ransom money, she thinks about releasing her son and many other "children of affliction" (59). We are also to understand that Olivia initially embarked on the fateful journey as a dutiful daughter because her father's ill health required that he travel to Lisbon, and she was willing to sacrifice her life for his sake and liberty. The play's emphasis on maternal and filial motivations (as on the joys of family reunions) further diminishes its ability to be read as empowering women as individually worthy of liberty.[18] Even if in Algiers, Rebecca and Olivia function as moral teachers and inspiring tutors to local women (Zoriana and Fetnah), the audience knows they will eventually resume their main positions as *wives and mothers* (or, in Olivia's case, a future mother) when they return to America and public order is restored.

Not so Fetnah. Fetnah's behavior as a dutiful daughter marks an abrupt shift in her conduct. Her eventual loyalty to her father is an incongruous turn given her political convictions thus far and seems to stem not so much from her innate femininity as from Rowson's need to defuse the tension introduced by her active politics. Fetnah's literal and liberal understanding of the United States as "a dear delightful country, where women can do just as they please"

17 Zoriana's attraction to Christianity similarly demonstrates itself in filial terms: "[T]ho' I'm fixed to leave this place, and embrace Christianity, I cannot but weep when I think what my poor father will suffer; Methinks I should stay to console him for the loss of you" (32).

18 Dillon adds the following (although in the context of her discussion of Rowson's complex British origin): "Enacting closure through the reunion of parents and child […] works to shift the locus of republican political identity and agency away from prodigal acts […] and toward filiopiety" (421).

(73) may be a reasonable conclusion of the lessons she learns from Rebecca, but it is nonetheless a dangerous conclusion: "Fetnah's romantic desires have become too politically (rather than personally) scripted" (Dillon 419). Fetnah is dangerous exactly because she demonstrates the potential political effect of Rebecca's teachings and the ability *to act* upon them. It is this activism that, to quote Rust, "most differentiates her from the American women of the play [...] what they offer she enacts" ("Activism" 236). Fetnah thus represents a form of republican motherhood gone wild in the sense that it is implemented literally and unchecked in the traditionally masculine public sphere. Her practical shrewdness means a transgression of the feminine separate sphere; mainly, it means that she can actually exercise and exert her influence outside of it. While this kind of activism is tolerable, perhaps even valuable, in Algiers, where her prowess can accelerate processes of democratization, it is far too dangerous for America and its republican mothers, and thus Fetnah, who carries Rebecca's idealism a step too far, must be contained.

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Partisan Allegories of Race and Desire
Algerian Captivity as a Musical Entertainment in Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*

Daniela Daniele

A Singspiel on the Algerian Crisis

The withdrawal of British naval protection in response to the American Revolution made the trade of brigs and brigantines in the Mediterranean very vulnerable to pirate attacks. The kidnapping of American seamen by the so-called "Barbary states" generated a number of American captivity narratives set in North Africa, which explicitly referred to this little-discussed but significant episode in transatlantic history.[1] The story of the "nearly 500 American sailors" who, between 1784 and the early 1800s, "were seized by North African corsairs and sold in the Algerian, Tunisian, and Tripolitan slave markets" (Smith-Rosenberg 62) was successfully staged by Susanna Haswell Rowson in *Slaves in Algiers, or, A Struggle for Freedom*, first performed at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia on June 30, 1794.

As the author announces on the title page, this "play interspersed with songs" (1) was dedicated to "the citizens of the United States of North America" (3) and adapted to the Mediterranean crisis the same plot that had been set to music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in his *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* [*The Abduction from the Seraglio*] (1782). Like Rowson's play, Mozart's famous Singspiel in three acts (based on the libretto by Johann Gottlieb Stephanie on a theme developed by Philippe Rameau) consisted of extended dialogues interspersed with musical ensembles, ballads, arias, and songs. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg acutely captures the isomorphism of the libretto set by Mozart,

1 The factual and fictional circumstances of the imprisonment of several American crews are well accounted by Andrew S. Gross and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg.

arguing in her essay that in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the "basic plotline is much the same. British lovers are enslaved in North Africa […]. An escape is foiled until the Dey relents and releases the two couples" (88, fn. 51). Several onomastic recurrences further relate Rowson's play "interspersed with songs" to Mozart's Singspiel, starting from the Constant family, whose name matches the Spanish protagonist Konstanze in Stephanie's libretto, to the pasha Selim in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, whose name is ascribed by Rowson to the resigned concubine, Selima. As for the underlying seduction plot, while *The Abduction from the Seraglio* recounted the kidnapping of the Spanish damsel Konstanze by a Turkish Sultan who aimed to marry her, Rowson responded to the Algerian crisis by dramatizing the abduction of an American damsel by the Dey. In response to his sexual assaults, Olivia's flirting and "proffered marriage to the dey" (Rust 226) re-actualize in the context of the Algerian crisis the deception strategy previously adopted by Konstanze in Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in her attempt to keep the Turkish pasha at bay while waiting for liberation.

In the spoken and musical structure of Mozart's Singspiel, Konstanze's heroic resistance to the tyrant's advances is expressed in an alternation of dialogues and lyrical songs set to music, and this alternation of prose and poetry is indeed reproduced by Rowson in her play. Although there is no evidence that the announced songs in Rowson's play were actually sung, Marion Rust does not hesitate to define *Slaves in Algiers* as a "musical comedy" (216) and reproduces in her book the musical scores of the songs featured in the 1795 play *The Volunteers* (Rust 235), which the playwright also defined as "a musical entertainment."

In the same way, in this chapter, I invariably tend to consider the lyrical elements of what the author announces as a "play interspersed with songs" as parts of both a poetic and musical tradition and I discuss the culturally oppositional value of the seven short lyrical asides (which, in *Slaves in Algiers*, roughly correspond to the sung parts of the Singspiel). These lyrical intervals give voice to the non-Anglo characters who critically intervene in "songs" presumably set to music to balance the enlightened discourse extensively embraced in the main dialogues in defense of the civic virtue of freedom. More analytically, all seven of the lyrical masques are, along with Mr. Ferrell's didactic prologue and the author's final conclusion, the only sections of the play uttered in verse. They provide a temporary pastoral or comic relief from the violence of the recounted historical scene, which features the insufferable condition of the enslavement of both the American crew and of the non-Anglo

characters who equally aspire to flee with the Christian captives in order to play an active role in the new republican order. The only exception to the appropriation of these lyrical intermissions by Moorish characters is Mrs. Rowson's final envoi, which draws the moral conclusions and clarifies the rationale of the play (77-78), and Mr. Farrell's prologue in couplets (7-9), uttered in the name of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), to exercise with the American hostages in Algiers the same right claimed by old Priam to recover the corpse of his son Hector in the *Iliad*. Apart from these two textual thresholds lyrically inhabited by the author and Farrell, the generic mixture of prose and poetry in the play mimics the alternation of spoken and sung dialogue in Mozart's Singspiel, designing a dual structure that semantically corresponds to the cultural divide between the Christian characters (whose hegemonic viewpoint is proclaimed on center stage) and the Moorish ones (whose sensibility is expressed in the lyrical asides).

From a literary point of view, Rowson's "comic opera" (Smith-Rosenberg 86) looks back to the broader epic tradition of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century heroic romances, being equally based on the confrontation of Christian and Muslim cultures in the Mediterranean and on the drama of interracial lovers on both sides. When Rowson composed *Slaves in Algiers*, Torquato Tasso's immensely successful epic, *Gerusalemme liberata* [*Jerusalem Delivered*] (1581), was still very influential, having inspired in Europe, especially in the baroque period, a variety of adaptations in both poetry and music. Tasso's lofty epic model was continued in John Dryden's Restoration drama and his late adaptations of sixteenth-century Italian epic drama and French baroque theater, which feebly survive in the lyrical songs embedded in Rowson's play. The Orientalist legacy of this elevated style resonates in Rowson's dramatization of the impeded interfaith relations between Christians and Moors as highly representative of their warfare. In reframing Tasso's *fabula* in the new setting of another Mediterranean crisis, Rowson revives in seven songs the private conflict of Tasso's star-crossed lovers Rinaldo and Armida, the interethnic couple severely thwarted by the force of history.

After his acclaimed adaptation of Tasso's heroic poem, *Rinaldo and Armida* (1699), in 1706, British author John Dennis wrote a treatise against the Italian "Opera's [sic] which are entirely Musical" (iii) and in support of the "*Drama* establish'd here in *England* at the same time with Reformation and Liberty" (ix, original emphasis). The latter, he argued, unlike opera's "Diversions" and sexual "Gaming" (iv), secured "a good share of Virtue as well as Understanding" (iv). His demand for a "useful Entertainment" versus the "pernicious Amuse-

ment of Opera's [sic]" led him to express a preference for "Sense" over "Sound" (13), which we find perfectly reflected in Rowson's play. Its emphasis on the educational function of dialogues is aimed to stress, as in the Singspiel, the importance of the spoken parts over the emotional paroxysms. The latter, which prevail in the integrally musical dimension of Italian opera, served to harmoniously convey, in rhymes and music, sensual and emotional contents which, according to Dennis, hampered the rational access of the spectator to any didactic contents.

As a result, in the Enlightenment era, Rowson conceived her play as an alternation of poetry and dialogues which overtly leaned towards Dennis's scheme by intensifying the didactic role of the spoken parts while limiting the role of the songs to "musical entertainments" representative of the subaltern dimension of the Moorish components of the enslaving Algiers. Consequently, and unlike Italian opera and Tasso's sixteenth-century heroic drama, which became a poetic model throughout Europe, Rowson's play features a very limited number of songs in which interethnic couples and non-Anglo characters step forward. These poetic songs of the marginalized play a merely decorative role, however—being deprived, according to Dennis's codification, of any significant diegetic function (Sertoli, *Robinson* 15). In *Slaves in Algiers*, the lyrical depletion of what is left of the literary sophistication of the heroic poem testifies to the author's intention to stress the educational and didactic contents of her play.

The genealogical trajectory traced by Giuseppe Sertoli ("Racconto" 273) in his lucid investigations of Orientalism in the premodern era (a period entirely neglected in Edward Said's famous study *Orientalism*) allows us to look closer into the intercultural value of the singing interlude in the Singspiel but also into the alternation of prose and poetry in the double structure set by Rowson. The seven lyrical interludes which intersperse her play recall in their refinement the arabesque, ornamental style whose undulating opulence and flowery modulations briefly but significantly impinge upon the dramatist's enlightened discourse. The rococo curves of the epic romance, surviving in the sensual grace of lyrical intermezzos, hardly relieve the cultural tensions aroused by the North African trade wars enacted on stage. The residual elements of the heroic poem that intersperse the dual structure of the play constitute, at the turn of the nineteenth century, a mannerist entertainment whose exquisite, baroque style momentarily interferes with the enlightened rationalism of Rowson's neoclassical discourse and her efforts to contain and dismiss the residual Orientalism and encumbrance of the poetic interludes. In

a time grown more and more impermeable to the asymmetries and indulgencies typical of the baroque style, which had been rejected by Voltaire as early as 1760, the prevailing neoclassical aesthetic underlies Rowson's firm defense of American democracy and its rationally designed civic values, along with the Napoleonic imperial style and the linear façades of the early Republic. No wonder that, in her enlightened play written during the Algerian crisis, Rowson tends to confine the exquisite Oriental intricacies of the Italian epic romance to the figments of a mannerist imagination that, unlike the conflicted ethnic scenario of her patriotic dramatization, as it occurs in the enchanted garden of Tasso's epic pastorals, made binary terms like the natural and the artificial, the Christian and the Moorish, overlap in a playful *coincidentia oppositorum*.

Across three centuries of literary history, the Christian epic flourished in a composite, lyrical sphere of perfect tolerance, depicting a sort of "blessed abode" (Romero Allué 39) exemplified by the enchanted Armida's garden in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, which, in Rowson's interludes, still provides a short but significant respite from the interethnic fight that originated with the corsairs' kidnapping of the American crews during the Algerian crisis. The long-lived genre established by Tasso's heroic romance provided a pastoral model of interethnic coexistence among the Mediterranean cultures, which harmoniously included the dissonant, exotic charms of mésalliance.

In my view, the songs that lyrically intersperse Rowson's dramatic action still partake of the mannerist, enchanted space that temporarily suspends the dramatized confrontation of Christians and Muslims on the Algerian coasts. Their lyrical and non-Anglo perspective also questions the ethnocentric nature of the liberal argument conveyed by the author's two spokeswomen: the captive American protagonists Olivia and Rebecca. Their hegemonic discourse of Enlightenment advocates for the rational ethos of the late eighteenth century, in defense of the American anti-slavery principles and of their firm custody of sexual chastity. Onstage, Olivia (who was portrayed by Rowson herself when the piece premiered at the Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia) and her wise mother Rebecca stand out as embodiments of the moral and civic American values of the newly established Republic. By contrast, the musical interludes totally escape Rowson's enlightened rhetoric and look back to the Italian poetic model of the epic romance, which preserved an Oriental, interethnic space of exotic seduction in the Mediterranean. Such an interracial ground keeps questioning, in the lyricism of its amorous yearnings, the rigid ethnic divisions between the Christian and Moorish cultures whose fierce fight is

dramatized onstage. In other words, in *Slaves in Algiers*, this interracial dialogue, which persists in the lyrical form of songs, occupies only a minor, decorative position, like a capricious oddity and a floral marvel in the normative uniformity of the neoclassical structure of the play.

The lyrical extravaganza of these musical intermezzos does not hint at the author's ideological concerns with liberties but, in accordance with the pastoral literary tradition, defends the private values of love and gallantry, countering the Christian program of republican America with the languid finesse of its skits and sketches. As a pagan counterpoint to Rowson's imperial and imperative "talent for invective" (Introduction xxv), which Cathy N. Davidson considers a prerogative of the eighteenth-century discourse, the apathetic ecstasy and the rococo style of the lyrical interludes rely on the rhythmic invention of their rhymed structures, intermittently interrogating Rowson's prescriptive patriotism. In the play, the urgency of the playwright's address in defense of civic value, mortified by the enslaved conditions in Algiers, is also temporarily diverted by the entertaining and erotic features of a marivaudage of the mismatched couples which, in Restoration comedies, encountered the popular taste in a mixture of heroic and sentimental skirmishes aptly codified in John Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1668) (Sestito 11). In a play dominated, like *Slaves in Algiers*, by the Christian and liberal rhetoric of the Enlightenment, the lyrical songs of the Moorish characters involved in the amorous intrigues reenact in an intermittent sequence the trials of their interethnic encounters.

As I here recall in a genealogical literary perspective, the drama of hampered intermarriages was central in the mythicized version of the First Crusade provided by Tasso in *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581), the epic poem in *ottava rima* that, in a time of ethnic conflict, staged the repressed affective claims of the Christian knights, led by Godfrey of Bouillon, and Muslim women charged, like Armida, with magical and seductive powers. Such an interethnic romance, which in Tasso's heroic poetry divided the Christian army, was familiar to the American readers, having been amply borrowed and incorporated in the American captivity tales of the period with the emergence of a literary model of interethnic romance which, in Rowson's anti-slavery play, is actually denied, postulating a stark division between the Christian suitors and their Moorish objects of desire. Therefore, what survives of the important baroque legacy of Tasso's epic romances is the lyrical refinement of the songs, which breaks Rowson's enlightened discourse and her republican order, shifting the vantage point of the drama from the author's proto-feminist

and liberal stance to the Moorish voices whose lures vainly revive the interfaith dialogue introduced by the sixteenth-century Christian epic.

From the formal point of view of the dual Singspiel structure privileged by Rowson, in *Slaves in Algiers* we find a significant generic and cultural opposition at play. Like the one envisioned by Dennis between "Sense" and "Sound," this opposition confirms an unbridged gap between the moral and "reasonable Diversions" provided by the enlightened American spokeswomen of the playwright and the "monstrous" claims (Dennis 14) of the non-Anglo characters, whose songs gradually become plaintive elegies in memory of mixed-race love "Gaming" which, as Dennis warned in his codification, "removes that awe which Nature has plac'd between the Sexes as the Strongest Bulwark of Chastity" (iv). As a result, in Rowson's play, the vehemence of the writer's anti-slavery address is skillfully balanced by the increasing decline of the interracial complications of the marivaudage which, in the playful French style typical of Dryden's Restoration comedies, initially engages both Christian and Muslim characters in a dynamic of seduction mostly commented on from the minority viewpoint of the non-Anglos, whose songs disarticulate and question the vectorial trajectory of Rowson's political discourse.

The pastoral stylization of their lyrical asides,[2] therefore, recovers the residual exoticism of Tasso's sublime enclosed garden, with the reclusion of the harem girls in Algiers, along with Spanish Sebastian's comic relief, serving as the only condition generative of their lyrical diversions from the stern moralism of Rowson's institutional discourse. The author's partisan tones of civic resistance in the turbulent Mediterranean scenario of torturing measures and fierce detentions find a respite in the suave songs and the skittering divertissement that temporarily relieve this dramatic historical account of the Algerian crisis.

As mentioned above, the conflict exacerbated by what Andrew S. Gross defines as the American "commercial humanism" (12) is mostly rendered by Rowson through a vehement condemnation of the Algerian enslavement of the American crews in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the lyricism which she inherits from Tasso's complex tangle of interethnic encounters between

2 I refer to Fetnah's songs (17, 38) and to Zoriana's song (32-33). Mrs. Rowson's epilogue consists of a final song (77-78), written in a pastoral style, which identifies women with the harmonies of beauty and nature, as if to momentarily exorcise and disperse the belligerent echoes of the ethnic boundaries set by men.

Christian and Moorish characters, before their liberation, includes the romance of detention that the American male captives share with those oppressed Moorish women aptly defined by Smith-Rosenberg as "lyrical harem girls" (88, fn. 51).

Songs and Melancholia of the Harem Girls

More specifically, the Jewish Fetnah and the Muslim Princess Zoriana are forced to live in the oppressive luxuries of the harem and perform the excruciating songs of their cultural and sexual subjection in an Oriental garden, a major chronotope in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century heroic romance (Romero Allué 44) where pain and pleasures paradoxically coexist. Their gilded reclusion is sadly lamented by Fetnah, who had been brutally sold by her greedy father to the Algerian Dey: "it's all vastly pretty, the gardens, the house and these fine clothes; I like them very well, but I don't like to be confined" (13).

Despite her noble descent, the Dey's daughter, Zoriana, also seeks a way out of her hothouse of Oriental pleasures by allying with the fugitive American sailors and forging an interethnic alliance that many an American captivity narrative derives from the heroic epic tradition discussed above. The lyrical space inhabited by Fetnah is no less enslaving than the one which confines the captive American sailors: in her words, it is a "prison of golden wire" (13), traditionally associated with the enchanted *Arabian Nights*, which entered the British book market after its groundbreaking French translation (*Les Mille et Une Nuits*) between 1704 and 1712 (Conant xvii). The exquisite mannerisms and erotic licentiousness introduced by this Oriental world of mystery and wonders reinforced the influence of the generative models of Tasso's Christian epics, reconfiguring, after *Jerusalem Delivered*, the oneiric, bemusing sphere in which opposing knights in armor like the Christian Tancredi and the Muslim warrior maiden Clorinda sought an unexpected, erotic reconciliation.

The idealization of the interethnic encounters lyrically developed by Tasso as a sheltered court poet in Ferrara returns in Rowson's intermezzos in the shape of exquisite poetic interruptions and pastoral retreats in which non-Anglo and Moorish singers provide a utopian, interfaith allegorization of their severely disjointed space. Their atemporal, aesthetic refuge, independent from the patriotic and Christian moral of the play, produces poetic intervals aimed to balance Rowson's pragmatic regulation of "rude

ungoverned passion [...] and lawless love" (*Slaves* 64), which ultimately discourages all the attempted intermarriages in the play. Quite remote from the divisive, institutional codifications that enter the public discourse of the early Republic, the radical hybridity displayed by Moorish characters in the poetic intermissions revives the irreducible sentimental and cultural variety of Tasso's baroque garden. The luxurious evocation of the floral and animal life in the songs transcends the demands of the Christian liberalism that dominates the play and points to a form of poetry in which the interethnic dialectic between Christians, Jews, and Muslims can survive as a significant component of the Algerian captivity scene, which is otherwise dominated by war, tyranny and the enslavement stigmatized by the author, before the final rescue of the captive Christians.

Indeed, Rowson's patriotic and national concern privileges the reunion of the American lovers and betrothed on the grounds of their devotional and cultural affinities. But this selective move confines all the alternative flirtations and interactions previously commented upon from a non-Anglo perspective during the Moorish masques. In this respect, in *Slaves in Algiers*, the songs which intersperse the dialogues in the play constitute a sublime though ephemeral space of reflections for the non-Anglo characters where they feebly but distinctively interrogate the rigid racial and devotional distance intensified by the impending conflict. In Rowson's secularized version of the heroic romance, the Orientalist features of the poetic interlude stand out to no avail, like precious Ottoman gemstones carefully shrined and mounted on a dramatic texture aimed mainly to celebrate the rational and moral virtues of the American Republic. As a result, the Moorish plea for a possible erotic reconciliation with their Christian lovers in the Algerian state of enclosure results in a mere diversion and an exquisite though irrelevant interruption in the drama by the fugitive American hostages firmly placed by Rowson in the limelight. Thus disjointed from the main action, the rhymed songs of the non-Anglo characters feebly convey Zoriana's "pangs of disappointed love" (60) and flow like fading sirens' moans from the enclosed garden of their Moorish seclusion.

In comparison, the patriotic harangues of the American female prisoners who vehemently denounce the violation of the *Rights of Man* implicit in those segregated spaces of luxury and enslaving charms draw a clear ethnic and diegetic line between the declarative prose of their statements and the "interspersed" songs which illuminate, instead, a disenfranchised order of ethnic subalternity which aspires to obtain the same enlightened princi-

ples and the individual values of freedom claimed by the American fugitives. In other words, the idyllic space of the interlude serves to present the Mediterranean, non-Anglo characters but also to attempt an emancipation which the belligerent circumstances deny them. Among the seven Moorish songs which intersperse the play, the first composition in alternate rhymed verse allows Fetnah to sadly situate herself in the confinement of the Oriental garden as a deracinated rose which "Gather'd from its native bed / No longer charms the eye" (17). She is the most articulate among the Moorish characters and reappears in the fifth song to look toward the East, allegorically embodied by Aurorea, the goddess of dawn (38). The second interlude features her renegade father, the Jew Ben Hassan, a marginal convert to Islam and subject of the Dey, who speaks in a London vernacular (24). The third escapist song is Princess Zoriana's, which, in the typical lofty mode of these musical entertainments, invokes the transcendence of sweet cherubs to exorcise her own oppression as a Muslim woman (28). Her second song (which is the fourth in the sequence) sweetly expresses her hope to be as free as her Christian suitor, Henry, whose escape she eagerly facilitates, expecting to finally elope with him (32-33). The seventh song by Zoriana equally evokes the refined mannerism of a "rural scene" where, "[w]ith harmless nymphs and rural swains […] soft peace and pleasure reigns" (60). This semi-divine serenity clashes with the Dey's daughter's anxiety to quit the imprisonment of her Oriental garden. The sixth, unrhymed song is a funny self-portrait of Sebastian with a drinking bowl, which provides comic relief (53-54).

Thus specifically determined by the ethnic differences of the singers, in their apparently entertaining, parallel structure, the lyrical intervals articulate the pleas and concerns of the non-Anglo and differently enslaved characters whose requests remain neglected and have no effects on center stage. The pensive and poetic reflections of these outcasts stress the fragility of their lyrical space, the refinement and delicacy of which, though rooted in the most exquisite poetic tradition, are not sufficient to solve the ongoing conflicts. The disinterested nature of poetry in the play questions and interferes but does not regulate the war scene, and the only poem Rebecca reads aloud undoubtedly breaks her otherwise republican ratio but also comes from a book celebrating the "immortal youth" of the soul "amidst the war of elements" (18). Her own ideal appeal to a reconciliation hovers but never triumphs over the epic-heroic aspects of her inspiration, which times demand, basically confirming the clear divide between the mannerist diversions of the non-Anglo "singers" and the dramatization of the Americans' anti-slavery fight in Al-

giers. The very dual generic divide between the prosaic dialogues on the main stage and the lyrical asides formally reflects the division of two conflicting cultures which, as Mozart's Singspiel also does, reshape the Mediterranean emergency through a compelling mixture of poetry and historical drama, of epic and chronicle.

Such an uneven composition, in its "dramatic dynamics," reflects, according to Avital Ronell, Tasso's own ambivalent poetics, as they appear in the play that Goethe wrote on the life of the Italian epic poet, *Torquato Tasso* (1790). The German author semi-autobiographically depicts Tasso, no less than Rowson, torn between the lyrical ambitions of his classicism and the moral and reforming impulse which engaged him in the Romantic challenges of his Wertherian prose. These "competing aesthetic and anaesthetic theories of the artist" (Ronell 139) equally characterize Rowson's endeavor, which, as she admits in her preface to the play, is "equal in elegance and energy" as the product of her study of "the Ancients in their original purity," but which also serves "the moral and political principles of the government under which I live" and "place[s] the social virtues in the fairest point of view" (6). No less than Tasso's literary life dramatized by Goethe as a dual homage to lyrical beauty and the demands of history, *Slaves in Algiers* shows the naturalized American writer divided between her civic claims for republican justice and her preservation of a plural, lyrical space able to preserve the conflicted but authentic reasons of the star-crossed lovers who fight in the same battles on opposite sides.

However, in reducing the rococo interlude to a mere "decorative ornament" (Sertoli, "Racconto" 275) of exquisite beauty, Rowson severely limits the interethnic encounters in the poetic intervals of her play, making the voice of the non-Anglo characters only heard in the atemporal space of an entertainment anachronistically modeled on a baroque ideal of tolerance, absolutely alien from the prosaic realism of the concurrent action and of the novel to come (Sertoli, *Robinson* 171-72). In their tentative management of the Algerian crisis, which exacerbates the conflict between the Muslim and Jewish characters and the Americans, their attempted alliance is ephemeral and only effectual for the Western fugitives, like the parenthetic space of a lyrical intermezzo, which proves its maladjustment to the prose of warfare deployed on stage.

The dual generic structure of the play that has been stressed so far features the non-Anglo seducers who dominate the aesthetic and eroticized sphere of the harem in an interval of abandonment and complaint diegetically irrelevant which designs a parallel world well described by Voltaire when he

stated, in his own heroic drama in verse *Zaïre* (1732), that "indolence is sweet, but its consequence is cruel [la mollesse est douce, et sa suite est cruelle]" (73, my translation). Nevertheless, Voltaire's play adumbrated the possibility of a happy intermarriage before the attempted mésalliance of Muslims and Christians degenerates into a tragedy. In comparison, Rowson's expectations of the erotic reconciliation of those races who fight on stage are nonexistent, though it is invoked in the lyrical lament of Zoriana (28), vainly infatuated with the enslaved Christian Henry, whose escape she facilitates to no avail. By frustrating their interethnic romance, which indeed succeeded in the case of Zoriana's ancestor, Zoraida, the converted heroine in Cervantes's fable *Don Quixote* (1605/1615) explicitly credited by Rowson in her preface, in her dutiful homage to the Spanish genius who spent five long years in an Algerian jail (6), the author questions Voltaire's enlightened notion of religious tolerance based on the essential uniformity of human nature. Her anti-slavery stance postulates an ideal of freedom that applies differently to the many non-Anglos in her play, and especially to the harem girls whose vain pursuit of freedom seems to have a clear voice only in secluded rhymes.

In *Zaïre*, which circulated widely in English in Aaron Hill's popular 1735 adaptation, *Zara* (see Rust 216), Voltaire posits the alterity of an Orient that Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759) did not hesitate to absorb as a component of the human variety, according to the universalist design of a single human nature being able to carry different fruits (Sertoli, Introduction 16-17). The rococo principle of *vanitas varietarum*, defended by Johnson on Biblical grounds (Sertoli, *Robinson* 174), is suspended if not totally dismissed by Rowson's neoclassical aesthetic, however, which ultimately deconstructs the constitutive Christian assumptions of American democracy. When the republican mother Rebecca Constant unfalteringly claims that "slave […] is a word so abject, that, but to speak it dyes the cheek with crimson," her main recommendation is "not [to] throw on another's neck, the chains we scorn to wear" (73). Still, her warning is essentially contradicted by the segregated structure of a play that separates the non-Christians actively engaged in a fight for freedom from the American captives who are the only ones to accomplish that goal, leaving their Moorish allies in an unaltered state of captivity.

In their brief, lyrical asides, the Jewish damsel Fetnah and the Dey's daughter Zoriana suavely lament their female reclusion, no less painful than the one suffered by their enslaved Christian suitors and, in Tasso's tradition of the Mediterranean Christian epic, they escape with them to quit the unredeemed confinement of the Dey's harem. Their brown beauties stand as

the living evidence of a divided world that the republican ethos pragmatically ratifies by discouraging the conciliatory ritual of mixed marriages in the attempt to mediate ongoing conflicts. Such marital conciliation was achieved by the Indian Pocahontas in the generative American legend, and Smith-Rosenberg detects the historical reasons for the decline of intermarriage in the critical circumstances in which "the French and Haitian Revolutions radically expanded the rights of all men" (60). The fear of disorder and of the attempted violation of property rights, along with the incarceration of American sailors by predatory North African corsairs dramatized by Rowson, urged the nation to "establish [...] a military independence" against its "dangerous, racialized Others: barbaric infidels of North Africa, debased and enslaved sub-Saharan Africans, and [...] white America's original defining Other, the savage Native American" (Smith-Rosenberg 61). Hence, as *Slaves in Algiers* testifies, the transatlantic re-enactment of the American values of freedom and equality sadly applied only to the U.S. citizens and excluded their non-Anglo, Southern allies, along with the Spanish character Sebastian. As a consequence, Rowson's Barbary captivity play breaks with the redeeming conventions of the epic romance lyrically established by Tasso, attempting an institutional redefinition of "savages" vs. full citizens (Smith-Rosenberg 61, fn.8) which unmasks the limits of modern democracies.

Rowson's firm defense of an American Republic that sanctioned the independence of European Americans from British imperialism did not prevent her from endorsing the first naturalization process in the United States, which excluded all citizens of African descent (Smith-Rosenberg 56, fn. 2). Put in these divisive terms, the very emergence of "American democracy" strikes Smith-Rosenberg as an empty abstraction whose liberal ideals rest "on the solid basis of racial exclusion" (59). In a play written and performed "at the height of the slave rebellion in Saint Domingue" and "the same year that the French National Assembly abolished slavery" (Smith-Rosenberg 86), the new American Republic advocated by Rowson in fact endorses a legal system that denied the very principle of equality advocated by its enlightened constitution (59). In the divided setting of Rowson's republican play, unlike the colonial "Indian" princess Pocahontas, both Fetnah and Zoriana, as North African women, aimlessly bestow their aid upon the captive Americans without being released in return. Rowson draws from the asymmetries of John Dryden's Restoration comedy the theme of the Muslim women who generously contribute to the rescue of Christian captives without the expected reward of intermarriage, which, in the epic-heroic literary tradition, honored the Voltairean principle

of religious tolerance and the peaceful coexistence of all races on earth. In not acknowledging the help provided by the infatuated Fetnah and Zoriana, Rowson does not deny their talent and sensibility, which she amply displays in the harem-like space of their "dramatic entertainment" (6). As if to confirm the euphonic but ineffectual Orientalist charms of their lyrical reclusion, their minor though refined position constitutes a stylish and racialized space of reflection on the disenfranchised within the selective republican order of the free.

In the disjointed structure of *Slaves in Algiers*, another hybrid and non-Anglo character featured in the poetic interlude is the Spanish sailor Sebastian, who also attempts, like the Jewish Fetnah and Muslim Zoriana, a mésalliance with a Moorish damsel in his desire to bridge their cultural and religious distance. Rowson ridicules his sentimental and oneiric interval of interfaith tolerance, putting on front stage the epic values of an enlightened America that progressively marginalizes (outside of the lyrical intermezzos) any significant interracial alliance. In *Slaves in Algiers*, the unprejudiced infatuation of Tancredi, who encounters the Muslim Clorinda in the Oriental garden of Tasso's mythopoetic epic *Jerusalem Delivered*, gets periodically reenacted in vaporous asides of perfect lyrical proportions and utopian desire, soon to be disciplined by the juridically codified order of the democracy of the few, which firmly intervenes to regulate and rationally control the conflicted desire of interethnic lovers, until it slowly dissolves, as a stylish incongruence in the triumphant prose of the republican style. As the linearity of this normative discourse regulates and dispels any baroque and interethnic asymmetry in the name of reason and restraint, the lyrical interlude denounces its progressive alienation from Tasso's fabula of the Christian conquest as a disempowered allegory of race and desire, which can only survive as the mannerist feature of an epic paradigm in bad decline.

As the intermezzos keep renovating their baroque cult of variety and extravaganza, the Moorish dream of mésalliance and Christian conversion shows the signs of its failed integration, eventually disappointing the Moorish Princess Zoriana, trained, like Tasso's Clorinda, by a Christian slave to the Western cult of freedom. Though ready, like Miguel de Cervantes's Zoraida, to leave her home and faith to escort a Christian hostage out of her father's jail, the merciful daughter of the Sultan offers the enslaved Henry sufficient money and jewelry to buy his ransom, but draws no material advantage out of her infatuated devotion to the American captive. Once freed, Henry does not hesitate to leave the generous Muslim princess behind and reunite with

his Christian betrothed. Even in Voltaire's *Zaïre*, the eponymous naturalized Muslim damsel, ready to marry her beloved Turkish fiancé, sees their strong bond broken by the religious intolerance of a Christian relative who warns her: "And am I informing my deceived Lusignan / That a Tartar is the God that his daughter has singled out? [Et je vais donc apprendre à Lusignan trahi, / Qu'un Tartare est le Dieu que sa fille a choisi?]" (97, my translation). Therefore, despite all her anti-slavery claims, we can conclude that Rowson's racialization of social codes puts a decided end to intermarriage as a solution to the racial and religious conflicts in the Mediterranean, since in her republican world, the reason of state prevails and courtship and marriage remain strictly associated with a shared Christian commitment (Dillon 415). As a result, all the prospective interracial couples in Rowson's play—Henry and Zoriana, Fetnah and Frederic, Ben Hassan and the cross-dressed Sebastian, whom he mistakes for a harem girl—eventually renounce each other because, as Gross observes, although the "American civil religion, if not completely secular [...] separated church and state" (11), the fight against Barbary piracy was basically characterized "as a crusade against the infidels" (10). Even Rowson's liberal and feminist view that "marriage must be an egalitarian match based on mutual affection" (Davidson, *Revolution* 143) registers as an enlightened abstraction that highlights the author's proto-feminism but does not account for the substantial banning of the mésalliance from her public and private stage.

Despite the universal notion of freedom established by the author, her enlightened views exclude the power of desire, which also remains the exclusive prerogative of American citizens. Unlike Cervantes's Zoraida, in her own star-crossed love, Zoriana does not gain sentimental access to the Christian world regulated by her seventeenth-century model. Her beloved Henry finds his legitimate spouse in Olivia, the female emblem of American freedom and the one eligible to share with him the final paths of their long-cherished emancipation. She has nothing of the sweetness and charm of Zoriana but her return sanctions Henry's safe adherence to the norms that trade any previous interethnic dialogue with the triumphant, prosaic order of peers, absolutely impermeable to the aristocratic heroism of an epic in bad decline.

While Tasso's epic romance erotically merges but religiously divides the pagan Clorinda from the Christian Tancredi, in Rowson's historical play, no harem girl finds a mate within the ethnic *varietas* advocated by Samuel Johnson. Even from a structural point of view, the friction between the sensual pleasures of the Oriental garden where their songs are alluringly performed

and the front stage in which the Americans' anti-slavery action is carried out defines an epic field of fierce oppositions between instinct and state reason, between erotic impulse and heroic needs, between interracial desire and national concerns. If Tasso's pastoral play *Aminta* rehearsed in court theaters the unprejudiced idyll of nymphs and satyrs, Rowson's play allows such liberties only in the mannerist irresolution of the lyrical masque, which survived in parodic and degraded versions in many a popular Victorian theater.

In its dismissal of any heroic and poetic indulgence, *Slaves in Algiers* confines the utopia of the integrated world epitomized by Cervantes's fable of the converted Zoraida to well-wrought songs as a poetic, residual commitment to the interfaith alliance in the impending conflicts escalating in North Africa. Such a pastoral break constitutes only an aestheticized, hybrid note in a drama inaugurated in the name of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. In the play in which Rebecca warns: "never shall Olivia, a daughter of Columbia, and a Christian, tarnish her name by apostasy, or live the slave of a despotic tyrant" (72), the non-Anglo characters may claim only in rhymed songs the same liberties they see violated and ridiculed in the foreground. And since their verses smooth Rowson's didactic tones, she mitigates (in the prologue read by Mr. Fennell) the vehemence of the partisan "woman, pleading the Rights of Man" (9) by involving the Moorish singers in the skits and skirmishes of star-crossed lovers in an interfaith competition with the legitimate Christian couple, which entertains the audience along effective heroic epic patterns.

These patterns secure the success of the play making the final reunion of the American couples not as joyous as it seems, being the sad confirmation of the unbridgeable cultural differences John Dryden's Restoration plays started stressing by modifying the verse patterns and by replacing the rhyme structure of the close couplets adopted in his heroic drama, *The Conquest of Granada* (1670), with the more dynamic but less glorious blank verse to sustain the contrastive strategy of *All For Love; or, the World Well Lost* (1677). His conscious imitation of William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (c1607) resulted in a less elevated poetic diction to the advantage of ordinary and domestic feelings conveyed in verse.[3] What most concerns us, in Rowson's own

3 While in the rhymed play *The Conquest of Granada*, written in iambic pentameter, Dryden adopted iambic rhymes to stress the epic glory typical of the heroic drama, starting from *Aureng-Zebe* (1675), he dismissed the heroic couplets in the unrhymed *Don Sebastian* (1689) as if to hint to a depletion of the heroic values likely to be conveyed in blank verse. I thank Marisa Sestito for reminding me of the late metrical structure adopted

perilous play of mismatched couples and its own expressive alternation of poetry and dialogues is the increasing neutralization of the Voltairean plea for a religious tolerance still sustained by a fixed and rhymed verse structure. As I suggest in this chapter, in her play, a more disenchanted and prosaic realism increasingly disempowers the few unprejudiced advocates for interethnic coexistence, confining them to the *loci amoeni* of poetic tableaux as an orgiastic site of baroque and forbidden pleasures in which the Algerian beauties who still fancy a harmonious space of shared tolerance and miscegenation never gain the front stage.

And since no Christian is meant to trespass their licentious, enclosed garden, when their rigid boundaries are broken by the enslaved American sailor Frederic, the Jewish Fetnah has to rescue him from the Sultan's capital punishment by costuming him as a veiled woman. His ridiculed emasculation in his challenge of the prescribed racial and gender limits of the harem is another instance of Fetnah's and Frederic's interethnic adventure and clumsy joint escape from the Dey's palace. Once again, only Frederic is later admitted to the "enslaved Enlightenment" (Dubois 13-14) that selectively regulates the access of full American citizens to the liberties and benefits denied to their Moorish mates. Before the republican order gets re-established, the space of Oriental charms can only briefly host the gilded drama of the captive harem girls and the aggravating temporary enslavement of their Christian followers. The debt set by Fetnah's and Frederic's respective religious and cultural codes is paid by the untenable ridicule of cross-dressing, which the unsexed Jewish girl also suffers in her attempted escape in a boy's attire, along with her American ally induced to enter Fetnah's harem in female clothes in order to be spared an instant execution (Sorensen 181). The mutual exposure of their racial and gender crossing is hardly tolerated on the center stage, which is normative and alien due to the artificial nature and license of the lyrical interludes. Any interfaith alliance is therefore labeled as a form of disorderly conduct, dooming the brown girls to the undignified status of wayward women not entitled to the benefits granted to the free-born Americans (Castiglia 155).

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by Dryden in *Don Sebastian*, which is a play that Marion Rust also refers to as an influential source in Rowson's creation of *Slaves in Algiers* (216, fn. 29). This domestication of the verse structure in Dryden's heroic play inaugurated a prosaic era reflected in the unrhymed comic turns of Rowson's play, and especially in the debased travesty of the Spanish Sebastian, ridiculed and wooed by the deceived Ben Hassan, who mistakes him for a woman.

By contrast, despite their detention in Algiers, in their matronly composure, Rebecca and Olivia are spared these grotesque travesties, being impermeable to the aporetic license of poetry and fully entitled to establish the institutional protocols of their full participation in the *res publica*. The lucidity and restraint of their rational minds coincide with the sexual abstinence of these undefeated American women who stand out as unsurpassed models of female modesty in the rising democracy. In their exemplary conduct, they morally outclass the licentious harem girls culturally associated, like Armida in *Jerusalem Delivered*, with the enthralling charms of pagan seducers. In this respect, like Dryden's French domestication of the Italian heroic romance in his Restoration comedy of mismatched lovers, Rowson's play finally establishes the bourgeois moral standards of a culture of sentiment, which the freed American women end up embodying, as opposed to the Moorish harem girls who hardly fit them into the more adventurous and interracial management of their seductive powers.

An Untenable Coquetry

The presumed flirtatious attitude assumed by Fetnah and Zoriana is, in fact, an astute posture assimilating them, in their resistance to the Sultan's tyranny, to the strategic coquetry of Samuel Richardson's heroine in *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), a novel that the author of *Charlotte Temple* (1791)—Rowson's re-actualization of Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), written while she was still living in England—could not have possibly ignored. Seduction is indeed an important pattern in *Slaves in Algiers*, though it is culturally incompatible with her Christian ethos as well as with Islamic customs, which prevented veiled women from exerting any seductive charms, being absolutely inaccessible to men's eyes. This is exactly Royall Tyler's objection to the flirtatious nature of the erotic dynamism that, in Rowson's play, actively engages both Zoriana and Fetnah. His own fictional response to the pirates' attacks from the Barbary coasts, *The Algerine Captive; or, the Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill: Six Years Prisoner Among the Algerines* (1797), which consists of a picaresque travel narrative, overtly documents the absolute physical inaccessibility of Muslim women to the point that, as a medical doctor, the autobiographical protagonist has to introduce a thermometer through thick curtains in order to check the temperature of his invisible female

patient.[4] Compared to Tyler's factual account of the Barbary states, [5] in her Orientalist rendition of the harem as an interethnic space of poetry, Rowson unrealistically stirs it into an arena of licentious marivaudage borrowed from the Restoration comedy. In her clear manipulation of the historical facts, she enacts the failure of Zoriana's and Fetnah's seduction scheme in their efforts to win the love of the enslaved Americans and secure their way out of the harem, successfully dramatizing a racially divided world that in real life was indeed even more segregated and invisible to foreigners.

Nevertheless, in *Slaves in Algiers*, the struggle of the two Moorish girls to enfranchise themselves is determined by even more divisive moral standards. While the captives Olivia and Rebecca, who can proudly claim American citizenship, resist the sexual advances of the Sultan and the renegade Ben Hassan (15-16), as a harem girl, Fetnah cannot equal their perfect chastity. According to the rigid moral standards codified by the two white heroines, she remains confined, in her sensual, Moorish appeal, to the closeted space of the lyrical interlude. Quite spectacularly, her sweet poetry is absolutely absent from the public, institutional speech of the American Olivia who celebrates, as the playwright's alter ego, her nation with the neoclassical geometries and the rational rhetoric of legislation specifically designed to regulate the controversies of human passions. And since the legal codification of all democracies relies on this paradox of the repression of natural instincts, in its underlying Christian ethos, the enlightened motto of the republican mother Rebecca ("By the Christian law, no man should be a slave" [73]) registers as an empty and unadorned public speech in comparison to the private, eroticized hankering unraveled by Fetnah's and Zoriana's address.

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4 "I had never yet seen the face of a woman; even the female children being carefully concealed […] a large veil was then thrown over my head, I was led toward the couch, and was presented with a pulse glass, being a long glass tube graduated […]. This instrument was inserted through the curtains, and the bulb applied to the pulse of my patient, and the other extremity put under my veil" (Tyler 150, 152-53).

5 Tyler's prose, equally inspired by the Algerian crisis, provides a reliable account of the Barbary states, filled with a Voltairean open-mindedness that the narrator's torturing imprisonment does not hamper. Compared to Rowson's, Tyler's analytical tone is equally addressed to the "Liberal Public" (6) of American citizens, but his narrator manages to distance himself from the fanaticism encountered in those states while preserving the innocent curiosity of a Candide eager to study his Muslim captors with no prejudice.

The lyrical sophistication of their interludes speaks for the spiritual vagaries of the Moorish characters and their confinement in a cloistered but highly stylized dimension that, in its literary sophistication, outclasses the pragmatic philistinism of the public sphere. And since their atemporal moments of lyrical bliss inevitably contrast with the factual realities enacted on stage, it can be well argued that the dual nature of Rowson's dramatic discourse keeps hinting to the reclusive domain of poetry as one of the few utopian receptacles of cultural *varietas*, which feebly resists the increasingly "conservative and restrictive context" (Bartolomeo 30) that relegates the Voltairean principle of cultural variety and (religious) tolerance to an exquisite but inconsequent aside. The civic republican values Olivia unpoetically utters reduce characters to national and religious labels, which are indeed quite at odds even with the personal history of Rowson, whose claims to American citizenship were doubtful at best, having been born in England from a British loyalist father.

Never for a moment does Olivia sympathize with the non-Christian beauties who question the rigid cultural categories erected to separate the imprisoner from the imprisoned. Compared to their rococo resistance to the unaffected rhetoric of their American rivals, Olivia is a dispassionate, republican advocate, who appears as the legitimate American spouse, the racialized dream of her betrothed mate, Henry. In the same way, the love affair between the Jewish Fetnah and the American Frederic gets irremediably poisoned and complicated by the many travesties and charms aroused by the interracial nature of their bond, which finally registers as a short-termed, alien fantasy compared to the hegemonic power of the American couples.

It is worth noting that the guilty pleasures of interfaith desire are reserved to the reclusive, lyrical sphere of the infidels, the miscreants, and the "inconstant" (174), as Lise Sorensen wittily defines them, whose distinctive voice prevails in the mannerism of their exquisite intermissions, countering the normativity of the Constant families on both Mozart's and Rowson's frontstage. They are the outcast poets that the legislative determinations of the *Rights of Man* hardly tolerate, along with the erotic conflation of opposites constitutive of all baroque constructs. As Ronell concludes in her study of Goethe's dual strategy of "knowing and imagining:" "the theoretician and the poet were often at war with one another" (129). And *Slaves in Algiers* reveals a similar ambivalence regarding the "implications of competing aesthetic and anaeasthetic theories of the artist" (Ronell 134). Although the lyrical serenity of the poetic intervals does not substantially impinge upon Rowson's enlightened fascina-

Figure 1. Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave (1846).

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.

tion with the "desire for knowledge" (Ronell 130), it urges her instead toward an educational and institutional approach to the public scene, since the structural partition of her play between prose and poetry compellingly divides the dynamic resistance of the American freedom fighters on the run from the sublime meditations of the differently enslaved Moorish who dwell on at the indigenous, segregated margins of the unfettered, Western world. Nevertheless, in their racial and aesthetic difference, they offer a pensive counterpoint to the many turbulences of the dramatic action which, in patriotic defense of the enslaved Americans, vilifies the cultural inhomogeneity of the Moorish scene. By putting on center stage the trauma of the enslaved Americans, later

epitomized by Hiram Powers in his sublime, Hellenist sculpture, *The Greek Slave* (1846; fig. 1), Rowson enacts the horror of enchained women as white as marble and auctioned off like Augustus in a play whose claim for civil liberties applies strictly to the Western world.

Toward an "Enslaved Enlightenment"

It could be argued that, despite Rowson's proto-feminist take, in *Slaves in Algiers*, the Moorish and American women do not share a comparable "female" condition of captivity, because even though they all fight for the same freedom, the latter secure it while the disenfranchised non-Anglo outcasts vainly try to achieve that liberty by seducing their enslaved American partners. The chaste American heroines are impermeable to that rescuing conversion and even when, like Konstanze in Mozart's Singspiel, they promise to marry the Muslim tyrant, unlike the "harem girls," they are never sexually exploited, remaining the perfect incarnations of a Puritan modesty fully eligible for all democratic privileges. In the play, Olivia neither trades her sober independence for the "Oriental" luxuries of Fetnah's "splendid house of bondage" (13) nor is she exposed to the alluring corruption of the harem's gilded segregation. In the shrewd management of her sexual restraint, which Rowson was well acquainted with as the skilled author of *Charlotte Temple*, Olivia resists her captor's advances and successfully recovers her monogamous bond with Henry in the name of a liberty in love sanctioned by her American birthright. Therefore, as it occurs to Konstanze in Mozart's generative Singspiel, her strategic flirting with the Sultan never jeopardizes her unfaltering chastity, which becomes the bodily correlative of her patriotic defense of the American nation and the liberal values that bless her and her fellow countrymen.

Starting from the prologue, Olivia is referred to as the legitimate daughter of Columbia, whose sexual integrity has both public and private implications.[6] In the play, the modesty of Rebecca and Olivia and their private protest against all forms of sexual slavery prove quite influential in liberating her captive companions. In both *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and *Slaves in Algiers*, Konstanze's and Olivia's anti-slavery stance diegetically matches the vindication of their right to marry the partner of their choice, long before the

6 "The reigning *virtues* she has dar'd to scan, / And tho' a woman / plead the Rights of Man" (Rowson, *Slaves* 9, original emphasis).

final release of their enslaved lovers. In *Slaves in Algiers*, as they hold on to an ideal of sexual abstinence deeply rooted in Puritan self-restraint, such a persuasive power of fidelity coincides with sentimental freedom that constitutes another prerogative of the American heroines who rise in monogamous defense of their relations with their Christian partners. With that enduring chastity, Olivia incarnates the paradox of an enlightened epoch that saw the proliferation of anti-slavery tracts and public declarations of the *Rights of Man* while leading women toward an asexual model of female emancipation never to be mistaken for the licentiousness that remained associated with prostitution, as the only public sphere inhabited by women until modern times. As a result, *Slaves in Algiers* postulates a public scene that empowers American women as marble-like emblems of moral virtues. Their hampered love lives, therefore, assume an exemplary allegorical meaning in the dire and frigid circumstances dramatized by the playwright.

As a shrewd administrator of her own body, the enslaved Olivia makes of her sexual abstinence a private mutiny symbolically addressed to her fellow countrymen enslaved in Algiers, as if to share the patient, mutual expectation to recover their violated rights. In this respect, her resistance to the Dey's advances is a passive-aggressive maneuver defensively enacted in her patriotic rejection of the unwanted intermarriage urged by the Dey and of her related conversion. Like Konstanze in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, Olivia's chaste resistance to the Sultan's assaults has the effect of procrastinating her simulated marriage vow, making the time for her kidnapped companion (and for the American army at large) to reach the Barbary state, release the American hostages, and reunite the legitimate spouses, as any comedy requires. Sorensen astutely points out that Olivia's monogamous commitment to her Christian object of desire is pivotal in the transformation of this Barbary captivity play into a captivity romance (71), which perfectly fits Fredric Jameson's historicist notion of the "allegory of desire" (17-22). Accordingly, Rowson's comedy of manners maintains a strong political overtone, filling the historical drama with a chronicle of amorous incidents attributed to her female preoccupation with chastity as the sentimental key for the preservation of her countrymen's integrity. In this respect, as Gross rightly argues, *Slaves in Algiers* actively engages faithful spouses as representatives of "the sanctity of the American sentiment" (6) opposed, in their sexual mutiny against the Sultan's hideous advances, to the fallen Jewish and Moorish renegades in the play. No wonder that the announced intermarriage between the Algerians and the Americans never occurs (Dillon 415) and that Olivia's detour of the Sultan's as-

pirations to forcefully win her love stands out as an astute filibustering tactic of the war strategist who keeps the Dey at bay while waiting for her countrymen's military reprisal.

As a matter of fact, while Rowson was rehearsing her 1794 play, the peace negotiations with the Barbary states were still ongoing. They were concluded with the 1796 Treaty of Tripoli drafted by Joel Barlow, which negotiated the financial protection of America's commercial shipping rights in the Mediterranean against piracy. Before that treaty, the private vicissitudes of Rowson's American heroines enslaved in Algiers maintained a strategic, allegorical value, making their abstinence symbolic of the national defense of a violated democratic order. In this respect, Rowson's use of the female body as a sexualized bulwark against the oppressive Muslim tyrant becomes a distinctive, sentimental feature of her republican style, which drew a clear, normative line between the American patriots and their non-Anglo allies, gloomily restrained in the harem of their sexual oppression. Even in this respect, the mythopoetic force of their rococo intermissions is not without iconic resonance, since Olivia's female defense of her chastity is not a mere, private act of successful resistance to the Dey's abuse of power, but finds its most poignant allegorical representation in Gian Lorenzo Bernini's rococo sculpture, *Apollo e Dafne* (Galleria Borghese, 1622-25; fig. 2), in which the innocent nymph who escapes the assaults of her divine suitor finally turns into a tree, in a sublime anamorphosis that speaks for Olivia's unguarded exposure to the Sultan's violence and her transformation into the desexualized emblem of her vulnerable but enduring nation.

Along with freedom, fidelity is the main republican American value that establishes the racialized hierarchy of the "fully human" (Gross 13) in the play, concurrently stigmatizing the unbridled lust of non-Anglo infidels inclusive of the aforementioned harem girls but also the Jewish renegade Hassan and the lustful Dey himself who, as Henry remarks in the play, is capable of a loveless and "lawless love" (64). As the main emblem of this monogamous ethos, the virginal American spouse ends up embodying the Christian *res publica*, contributing, with her flawless modesty, to the codification of the republican notions of race, power, and desire. Along these normative and institutional lines, in Rowson's historical comedy, the rococo taste for variety and extravaganza, which looks back to the long-lived literary tradition of the epic romance, gets increasingly dispelled and replaced with the sentimental rhetoric of the rectitude of the American heroine, who ultimately marries not only into her class (Davidson, *Revolution* 145) but also into her race and religion.

Figure 2. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Apollo e Dafne (1622-25).

Photograph by Joaquim Alves Gaspar (CC BY-SA 4.0)

As I argued throughout this chapter on the generic and racial partitions that, in *Slaves in Algiers*, negotiate the great divide between prose from poetry and Christians and Muslims, the aftermath of the Algerian crisis imposed an exacerbation of the cultural and religious distinctions and the concurrent suspension of intermarriage as a colonial strategy to mediate new forms of the American presence in the Mediterranean. As a result, the new Republic seemed to require American-born partners like Henry for the American Olivia, despite his flirtatious intermezzo with Princess Zoriana. Olivia's recovery of her legitimate spouse is a conservative, conventional conclusion

that celebrates the bourgeois values sanctioned by the rise of the novel, in line with the selective Puritan project of the enfranchisement of the few. Meanwhile, the double standard emphasized by Rowson's dual dramatic structure confined the presumed licentiousness of interracial encounters with the non-Anglos to the ephemeral escapist diversion of a musical interlude. This enclosed, lyrical sphere keeps challenging, in the name of the reconciliation of opposites inaugurated by the sixteenth-century epic poem, the unheroic, domestic ethos of the rising middle class, its prose of life, and the related sentimental values of chastity and propriety, originating from the decline of the aristocratic values of honor and beauty and the castigation of racial difference on the slippery grounds of sexual (mis)conduct.

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American Theater and the Quest for a Republican Identity

Judith S. Murray's *The Medium; or, Virtue Triumphant* (1795)

Zoe Detsi

Judith Sargent Murray's largely overlooked play *The Medium; or, Virtue Triumphant* (1795) was written during one of the most challenging decades in early American history; challenging in terms of consistent political efforts to (re)define concepts of national identity, to safeguard republican ideals, and (re)formulate the role of the United States in the world. The rising political tension that stemmed from the emergence of party antagonism between the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans betrayed a wider national anxiety over the international instability caused by the terrifying aftermath of the French Revolution and the unsettling relations between France and England, as well as a persistent domestic unease at the haunting prospect of "democratic excess."[1] For both Federalists and Democratic Republicans, the task of building a nation proved immensely arduous, eventually causing a hardly acknowledged bifurcation in the development of American republicanism.[2] Postwar American society witnessed a political atmosphere of

1 The notion belongs to Elbridge Gerry, a Massachusetts delegate, who refused to sign the United States Constitution at the Continental Congress of 1787. Gerry's reaction was the result of his own first-hand experience of Shays' Rebellion (1786) and the disruptive threat of unruly people. It was this experience that made Gerry particularly wary of the shape and authority of the United States government as well as the liberties and limitations of the people: "The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy. The people do not want virtue; but are the dupes of pretended patriots" (qtd. in Billias 160).

2 In his seminal study on American ideology, Gordon S. Wood has explained that republicanism meant more for Americans than simply the elimination of a king and the

division between the republican promise of social regeneration and cultural openness, and the reality of restricted access to political identity and public authority.[3]

By the 1790s, republicanism had turned into a most vulnerable concept embracing alternate and often conflicting ideologies, retaining the vitality of classical republicanism in theory while in practice its very own principles were compromised against a number of unresolved issues, such as slavery and naturalization, as well as against the newly emerging challenges of assertive individualism and aggressive commercialism.[4] The abstract propositions and universalist assumptions of republicanism heightened its radical implications causing a serious discrepancy between the revolutionary claim to equal rights for all and the Founding Fathers' commitment to social stratification and racial/ethnic hierarchy.[5]

In the case of women, the discrepancy between their unprecedented access to the public world of the Revolution and their systematic exclusion from the political process of nation building exposed an effort to tailor the Lockean

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institution of an elective system. It added a moral dimension, a utopian depth to the political separation from England—a depth that involved the very character of their society (47-53). The major ideas of republicanism included those of classical antiquity, civic virtue and self-government, and equality of opportunity. For more information on American republicanism, its influences and development, see Kerber, "The Republican Ideology of the Revolutionary Generation."

3 As Joyce Appleby justifiably wonders, "if the Revolution was fought in a frenzy over corruption, out of fear of tyranny, and with hopes for redemption through civic virtue, where and when are scholars to find the sources for the aggressive individualism, the optimistic materialism, and the pragmatic interest-group politics that became so salient so early in the life of the new nation?" (937).

4 Drew McCoy uses the term "hybrid republican vision" to describe the ideological effort to "adapt the moral and social imperatives of classical republicanism to modern commercial society" (237-38). J.R. Pole points out that in most states the legal interpretation of the obligations of republican government "conformed more closely to the dictates of social and economic interests than to any explicit requirements of republican spirit" (124). Also, the naturalization laws that were passed in the 1790s greatly challenged the republican discourse of equal opportunities for all; see Jacobson; Smith.

5 The Lockean discourse of natural rights was used by both Federalists and Democratic Republicans. The Federalists, with their insistence on a hierarchical social order, sought to contain rather than exploit the radical power of natural rights for fear of any threat that might challenge social and political institutions. On the other hand, the Democratic Republicans invoked the rights of man to expand the franchise to larger portions of the white male population eliminating the property requirements for men.

tradition of natural rights to fit specific gender definitions. In examining the gendered effects of the political shift from the Federalist to the Democratic Republican party, Jeanne Boydston has argued that the rise of Jeffersonian republicanism redefined elite white women's claims to public authority through a domestic discourse (262).[6]

It seems that Murray's literary response to the dynamically changing socio-political climate of her time is as complex, and at places as self-contradicting, as the wider political effort to substitute the "republican" with the "national" in the post-revolutionary era. Literary scholars approaching the entirety of Murray's writing are faced with the challenge of accounting for a number of ideological contradictions. Her work has been described as both conservative and radical; as informed by Federalist ideas about the imperative of class hierarchy and social authority, and her adherence to more progressive Universalist tenets regarding the spiritual equality of women as well as her faith in the republican utopia of civic virtue and women's more active role in the new political society.[7] It could be argued that Murray's own transition from enthusiastic support of radical egalitarian doctrines to a more conservative social and gender vision in fact reflects the transitional moment in the

6 The political vision of the Democratic Republicans made it clear that the main impediment to women's voting was their sex; see Zagarri, "Gender and the First Party System." With the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), women's exclusion from politics could no longer be taken as an unquestioned given invoking nature to justify their subordinate status, but had to be rationalized within a socio-political context. The result was a gendered division of rights and, concurrently, the elaboration of a separate spheres ideology (Zagarri, "The Rights of Man and Woman" [229-30]). As Jeanne Boydston pointedly argues, "the term 'republican motherhood' is perhaps most appropriately capitalized, as 'Republican motherhood,' to locate it both chronologically in the late 1790s and discursively within the rhetoric of Jefferson's particular brand of republican thought" (262).

7 Pauline Schloesser argues that "Murray was the founder of liberal feminist thought in the United States" (157), while she hastens to add that her social outlook and political thought are laden with "inconsistencies" (158). Myra Jehlen calls Murray's "On the Equality of the Sexes" a "feminist manifesto" (874), whereas Nina Baym is very careful when applying the label "feminist" to Murray (iii). Sheila Skemp stresses Murray's class consciousness and her support of "a traditional, organic society based on order, deference, and hierarchy" (9). For Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton, the concept of "Republican Motherhood," despite its ambiguities and limitations, provides a safe ideological context for Murray's use of republican virtue in favor of women's better education and autonomy (Kerber, "Women and the Shaping" 227-58; Norton 242-55).

broader political culture of the new nation when the radicalism of the revolutionary discourse was gradually supplanted by opposing, yet equally limiting, civil discourses that sought to establish their own views of social hierarchy and democratic governance.[8]

As a woman writer in the post-revolutionary United States, Murray experienced more intensely the ideological fluidity and confusion of a society wavering between the still vibrant echoes of revolutionary radicalism and the reality of political conservatism in the formation of the American body politic. However, living in a society where the power of the printing press grew as forcefully as the desire of the new nation to disseminate republican ideas and patriotic sentiments, Murray quickly turned to the written word to acquire a public voice.[9] Employing the standard practice of most women writers of the time who wrote under pseudonyms, Murray commented on a host of political and social issues drawing upon a range of intellectual traditions and using multiple genres toward self-expression.[10] While a number of scholars have studied Murray's diverse literary production and have all agreed on the significance of her writings for a better understanding of American women's relations to the social order and political culture of the new nation,[11] her dra-

8 In the 1790s, the process of party formation gave rise to divergent political orientations regarding the formation of social structure and the future of the nation, which, in both cases, sought to circumscribe the radical promises of the Revolution. On the one hand, the Federalists proposed a strong, centralized government favoring a clearly stratified society and the leadership of a wealthy and educated elite. On the other hand, the Democratic Republicans envisioned a social order in which race and gender, instead of class, were the principal factors in determining one's access to the public sphere and one's eligibility for self-government, prioritizing free white males over women, African Americans and Native Americans. For more information about the political and social vision of the two competing parties, see Ben-Atar and Oberg; Elkins and McKitric; Horn; Lewis and Onuf; Sharp.

9 For more information on the development and significance of the emerging print culture in the early national period, see Brown.

10 For American women's access to the written word and their use of pseudonyms, see Hicks. Skemp has made an interesting comment pointing out that "because she [Murray] always wrote under a pseudonym, sometimes as a woman and other times as a man, her disguises personified the fluidity of gender identities" (xiii).

11 During the post-revolutionary years, Murray was one of the most prolific writers in the United States. According to Joanne Dobson and Sandra A. Zagarell, the three most influential women in print in the 1790s were Mercy Otis Warren, Sarah Wentworth Morton, and Judith Sargent Murray, whose participation in the literary culture of the newly emerging Republic was grounded in the Enlightenment belief in woman's intellectual

matic works have received little attention.[12] However, Murray's venture into the world of the theater in the 1790s may be interpreted as a conscious political act given the theater's new social role as an explicit site for enacting national narratives and negotiating republican values.[13] As "one of the earliest to patronize the theatre" (Field 32),[14] Murray's playwriting seems to have grown out of her firm belief that "a virtuous theatre is highly influential in regulating the opinions, manners, and morals of the populace" (Murray, "Panegyric" 227). Murray saw in the theater a most effective public *medium* central to the cultural development of the nation and the establishment of a republic.[15]

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and moral equality to man (364). See Baym; Harris; Rider; Schloesser; Skemp; Vietto, among others.

12 For a brief discussion of Murray's plays *The Medium* (1795) and *The Traveller Returned* (1796), especially within the context of disputed dominant definitions of American womanhood, see Kritzer. Jeffrey H. Richards has also analyzed Murray's *The Traveller Returned* through its obvious similarities to Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771) while arguing, in her favor, that she has "put a stamp of originality on her creation" (91) by adapting it to her contemporary social reality and promoting patriotic sentiments and republican virtue. See Detsi-Diamanti for an analysis of *The Traveller Returned* as an expression of Murray's skepticism toward the social achievements and legal transformations brought about by the American Revolution.

13 A number of studies have focused on the role of the theater in the construction of the American national identity; see Mason and Gainor; Richards; Wilmer. Heather S. Nathans has provided a most enlightening account of how the political tension of the 1790s "quickly found its way into the playhouse, as every aspect of playgoing, from seating arrangements, to musical interludes, to script choice, to performance became a potentially problematic declaration of allegiance to a particular political, economic, or social agenda" (77).

14 In her essay "A Panegyric on the Drama," Murray defends theater and attempts to refute the dominant misconceptions about theatrical amusement. She makes a strong claim against the legal prohibition of theater: "in the present enlightened era and administration of liberty, the citizen would hardly consent to an abridgement of those amusements, the evil tendency of which could not be unequivocally demonstrated to his understanding" (225).

15 Murray took great pains to conceal her identity as a playwright fearing the impact of her association with the theater on her second husband, the Universalist minister John Murray (Drexler 409). Her persistence, however, to see her play produced was spurred by both her own artistic ambition and financial need.

Republican Politics in *The Medium*

The political undertones of Murray's first play, *The Medium; or Virtue Triumphant*, capture the ideological complexities, or rather contradictions, of the 1790s. Despite the play's obvious weaknesses, its repetitiveness, intense moralizing, and crude characterizations for the sake of didacticism, *The Medium* can be read as an early day social comedy, a most worthy forerunner to Anna Cora Mowatt's much more spirited and refined mid-19th-century play *Fashion* (1845).[16] Although the play's main plotline traces the melodramatic complications arising from Mr. Maitland's objection to his son's romantic attachment to Eliza Clairville, Murray moves beyond that and takes an incisive look into the social structure and cultural profile of post-revolutionary American society.[17] Like Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787) and Robert Munford's less known and much less successful *The Patriots* (c1777), Murray's play brings to focus a number of social types and cultural attitudes while exploring their appropriateness and validity for the new political system. When it comes to issues of social inclusion and acceptance, Murray cannot escape her own class conditioning and Federalist skepticism regarding all people's fitness for self-government in the American Republic.

Within this context, the play's title merits some attention as it serves as an ideological backdrop against which political ideas and cultural values are measured. What is *The Medium*? What does it stand for? How is it interpreted? Mr. Maitland, a member of the older generation of the American elite, is actually the one who introduces the concept of the *medium* in the opening scene

16 The Boston newspaper *Federal Orrery* announced that a new comedy, written by a "Citizen of the United States" would be performed at the Federal Street Theatre on March 2, 1795 (Skemp 254). Though it enjoyed only one performance, the play has entered the annals of early American theater as the first American-authored play to have been performed on Boston stage, with Murray as the first woman in Boston to have had a play professionally performed (Harris xxxvii; Schloesser 156).

17 Although *The Medium* essentially flopped upon its initial production at the Federal Street Theatre in Boston, Murray made repeated—yet unsuccessful—efforts to give her play another chance and have it produced at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, even resorting to changing its title to the more melodramatic *Virtue Triumphant* (Skemp 255). The play was eventually published along with her other works in *The Gleaner*. Murray's second play *The Traveller Returned* did not fare very well either. For criticism of the play, see Skemp 259. See also Murray's first biographer, Vena Bernadette Field (33-40).

of the play—underlining its major significance in determining all aspects of human life and development:

> MAITL: […] a Medium is ever self-balanced—it is the centre of perfection—the philosopher's stone—the genuine panacea for every evil. It is that divine alchymy, the operation of which will finally transmute this iron age of ours, restoring the golden reign of philosophy and of reason. (16)

Maitland's perception of the *medium*, however, transcends his philosophical rambling and becomes a rigid framework of ideas that determines his personal relationships and political allegiances. When it comes to politics, Maitland's *medium* is the middle ground between monarchical tyranny and democratic excess: "It is my attachment to the immaculate consistency of a *Medium*, which makes me such a confirmed enemy to the Aristocrats, Democrats, Jacobins, le Peuple Soverain, &c. &c. Kings are one extreme, subjects are another" (16). For Maitland, the desired antidote to these easily identifiable extremes is the ambiguously defined concept of the *Commonwealth of Equality*, a kind of "blest fraternity" in defense of the "general good" (16). What this means exactly, however, remains rather hazy throughout the play, and it is left unclear who really qualifies to be included in this "blest fraternity." In his conversation with Colonel Mellfont, an Englishman traveling in the United States and soon to be revealed as the wealthy guardian of Eliza Clairville, there is a confusing blending of the concepts of the *medium* and *equality* with social class, personal worth, and the "select few:"

> MAITL: This world is given to see things through a false medium.
> COL. M: I am perfectly of your opinion, Sir; the world is, indeed, given to error; it is only a select few who see things as they are; while the blinded multitude, borne in the vortex of folly, will continue their idle whirl on the very brink of destruction. […]
> MAITL: You have spoken rationally. I have always been a cool, deliberate man, Sir, a lover of reason, and a friend of equality: some of my countrymen hate Frenchmen—some hate Englishmen—these are both extremes, Sir; but, for my part, I love a man of worth, let him be the growth of what clime he will. I am a true brother of the Royal Arch—my motto is equality, and I embrace the brotherhood with my whole heart, Sir. (51-52, original emphasis)

Maitland himself, however, with his upper-class status and essentially conservative ideas regarding class hierarchy and social background, seems to negate

the very definition of the *medium* and *equality* he so fervently espouses. When it comes to his personal life and his relationship with his son, Maitland's unwavering opposition to Charles's love for Eliza Clairville, whom he has never met, betrays a personality bordering on extremes. His stiffness and narrow-mindedness invite another kind of *medium*, one that is defined through the *mediating* actions and more impartial judgment of his friend, Mr. Weston, who suggests that he, at least, "consent to see Miss Clairville" (7). To this, Maitland vehemently responds:

> MAITL: I know her, Sir, I know her; she is a needy adventurer, who came over here in the train of a French lady; and, imagining America was the land of Utopia, she preferred a continuance here to a return to blood and murder, and hath now set up the very honourable trade of fortune-hunting. There, Sir—there is her character in toto, and her hopes are the natural result of her situation. (17, original emphasis)

Maitland's opinion of Eliza takes on political dimensions, echoing contemporary anxieties about the turbulent situation in Europe and its impact on the vulnerable nature of American democracy. Despite Maitland's limitations as a character, his adherence to the value of the middle condition in all aspects of human life allows Murray to express her own concerns regarding the conflicting ideological forces that characterized American society in the 1790s. Almost a year before the production of her play, Murray, in her "Sketch of the Present Situation of America" (1794), had openly vouched for national neutrality in the face of the tremendous challenge posed by the aftermath of the French Revolution and the ensuing war between France and Britain, as well as for composure and moderation in order to effectively cope with the domestic discord caused by the rise of factionalism in the United States. Without hesitating to voice her own political allegiance in the "Sketch," Murray cautions about the danger threatening the blessings of a federalist government upon "which we were successfully building the superstructure of every thing useful, every thing virtuous, every thing ornamental" (50). She laments the fact that faction, as "a fearful and destructive hydra" (50), has "introduced its cloven foot among us; with astonishing effrontery it hath dared to lift its baleful head" (53). Murray warns against both despotism and anarchy, as equally disastrous extremes, opting for "the general observance and establishment of order," and wishing that "every citizen would learn, *habitually*, to venerate *offices* and *characters*, devoted to, and engaged in, the administration of justice,

and to which every *good and worthy member of the community is alike eligible*" (56, original emphasis).

With *The Medium*, Murray seeks to give dramatic form to the major issues she addresses in her "Sketch of the Present Situation of America." When Charles—heartbroken by his father's unyielding stance and Eliza's refusal to marry him but on "equal terms" (32)—announces his decision to leave for Europe, Robert, his faithful servant, exclaims in panic:

> ROBERT: But these are perilous times, Sir; very perilous times; it looks as if there would not be a mother's son left in the Old World; and, when I consider how often I have carried you in these arms, it afflicts me sorely, master Charles, that you should run after wars and murders, and bloodshed.
> CHARLES: I am not going to the field of battle, Robert.
> ROBERT: There is no knowing what might take place, Sir; and then this Colonel Mellfont belongs to the English—everybody says they will have bloody times in England Master Charles; and, for my part, Sir, I think them are best off who have least to do either with French or English. (45)

In Murray's dramatic world, neutrality seems to be the best option for the new nation.[18] The *medium* offers an alternative of rationality, self-control, and stability to minimize the impact of the disorder and chaos ravaging Europe and to counteract any form of domestic discord that might jeopardize the new political system. However, the attainment of the *medium* proves to be a process fraught with ideological inconsistencies. Murray's play depicts a society seeking its way through conflicting political views over international and domestic affairs, changing social patterns, and cultural standards reproducing—consciously or not—the major contradictions between republican ideology and social reality. Although throughout the play, the tendency to connect the abstract concept of equality with the notion of personal merit provides a discursive framework for social ascendancy in a democratic society, the persistent references to social class and economic status betray a reality undermining such a possibility. In the case of Eliza Clairville, for example, her exceptional personality, her unparalleled virtue and dignity, praised by almost all the characters in the play, cannot overcome the "insurmountable obstacles" (31) posed by class barriers in her union with Charles:

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18 In view of the "dreadfully tempested" political situation in Europe, Murray advises the American people that "nothing but an overwhelming self-partiality could lead us to expect escaping at least the outskirts of the hurricane" ("Sketch" 51).

> ELIZA: Had I been addressed by a man, whom my heart and my judgment had approved, and who had been born the equal of my humble family and lowly fortune, to a single moment's suspense he should not have been condemned; my extended hand, accompanying my yielded heart, our mutual attachment should have received the sanction of the holy priest. (30, original emphasis)

Eliza's autonomy and sound judgment, evident in her determination to "never, but on equal terms" (32) plight her faith with Charles, are actually undermined by her social status as an orphan, dependent on the Bloomville family, "a kind of upper servant" (72). In her meeting with Maitland, Eliza is so class-conscious that she becomes disarmingly outspoken: "Subordination, rank and degree, are of divine original; the lines are justly drawn; and he who breaks the rank assigned him by his Creator, is surely an aggressor" (62). Though Eliza's "charming frankness" (62) eventually wins Maitland over, this is not enough for the kind of equality that would ensure Eliza's domestic bliss with Charles. The "miracle" that would render her "the equal" of Charles (62) comes from a melodramatic twist of fate by which she is rewarded with social status and wealth for her impeccable character. Despite the happy denouement in the love affair between Eliza and Charles, the question still remains: is it money, social standing, or personal merit, or all combined that determine one's social acceptance in the democratic society of the new nation?

The "society of men of genuine worth" (83), that Major Bloomville so happily announces, is an exclusive one with rigid boundaries intended to keep out "unworthy" men like Captain Flashet, a former soldier of the American Revolution. Captain Flashet's pretensions to sophistication and his unwarranted claim to social ascendance are meant to instigate a rather scathing criticism against all those whose rise to social visibility was more the result of the general socio-political mayhem of the revolutionary period than their own personal merit and achievements.[19] Captain Flashet's efforts to slither his way into the more "respectable" circles of American society are met with annoyance and scorn. This becomes evident when Captain Flashet pays Charles Maitland a visit:

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19 Robert Munford's play *The Patriots* (c1777) is an early example of the concern that the Revolution and the ensuing transition to a republican political system would disrupt traditional social relations and forms of deference and open the way for "men who aim at power without merit" (268).

> [Enter Captain Flashet]
> CAPT. F: Faith, I am glad to see thee, Charles. How is't, my boy?
> CHARLES: Intolerable familiarity. [Aside.] When did you come to town, Sir?
> CAPT. F: Two days since, Charles.
> CHARLES: Do you bring any news, Sir?
> CAPT. F: News, old boy, what of news? Thou lookest plaguy glum. I should hardly have run through fire and water to see thee, if I had prophesied such a reception; and I have, bona fide, labored more to make myself visible in this apartment, than ever Alexander the great did, in cleansing the Herculian stables.
> CHARLES: Idiot. [Aside.] (21, original emphasis)

Captain Flashet receives Murray's poignant satire as he embodies the threat that a distorted version of republicanism might pose in terms of the people's unchecked access to political power and social authority. Although his character is most likely designed for comic effect, Captain Flashet is both product and reflection of a highly sentimental patriotic discourse reminiscent of the "glorious" American Revolution and allied with a self-assuring sense—however illusory—of bravery and honor. Captain Flashet boasts of having served "under the great WASHINGTON" [...]; of being "admitted into all WASHINGTON'S councils—finger next to the thumb—nobody but Captain Flashet, Captain Flashet, at every turn" (22). For people like Captain Flashet, whose claims to personal merit are totally unfounded, the new political system with its egalitarian promises can only magnify their limitations and weaknesses, eventually turning American society into Alexander Hamilton's greatest fear, an "imprudent democracy" (qtd. in Zinn 95).[20] Captain Flashet personifies the terrifying prospect of the abuse of power in a democratic society. When he speaks to Robert, Charles Maitland's servant, Flashet is unnecessarily offensive, betraying his own insecurity in his effort to forge for himself an identity of social superiority:

> CAPT. F: Here you, Mr. Grey Hairs, where is my friend Charles?
> ROBERT: My master, Sir, is very busy, and can't be interrupted at present.
> CAPT. F: Can't be interrupted, rascal?

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20 Alexander Hamilton shared with other Federalists the belief that the Constitution be designed in such a fashion to assure that the few would be the predominant force in the nation's government. For more information on Hamilton's vision of the social and political future of the United States, see Ferling 172-200.

> ROBERT: Rascal, Sir! This is a name which I never yet received from either of my masters!
> CAPT. F: Don't prate, old fellow, don't prate, I say; or, as I am a soldier, I will lend thee a blow that shall lay thee as stiff as was Julius Cesar [sic], when he was beheaded by Oliver Cromwell. […] If we men of the sword do not exert ourselves, and be seen in our place, we shall be treated with as little respect as a dead Carthagenian. (56, original emphasis)

Unlike Flashet, however, members of the upper class approach equality with a confidence pertaining to their social status, and a new sense of entitlement as they undertake to safeguard republican values and uphold social justice and morality. Charles exhibits genuine concern for the problems of the less privileged and serves as a heroic figure, a source of inspiration for the lower classes:

> CHARLES: Hast thou visited our friends in Stricken Alley, as I requested?
> ROBERT: Oh! Sir! Could you have heard their lamentations, I am sure it would have melted you!
> CHARLES: Lamentations, Robert?
> ROBERT: Yes, Sir, for at the same time that I gave them your liberal benefaction, I informed them of your intended departure; and such a general shout of sorrow, old as I am, I never before heard.
> CHARLES: Poor unfortunates!
> ROBERT: And then such blessings as they poured on you—his reward will be great, said one—It cannot exceed his deservings, said another—May the good God protect him, said all.
> CHARLES: I feel enriched by their united benedictions.
> ROBERT: But what, dear Sir, will become of them?
> CHARLES: They shall still be my care. (45-46)

Although in the social structure of Murray's play the American elite seems to ensure stability and coherence through their political control and hegemonic influence, there is a fleeting glimpse of a rift in the democratic process of the new nation. For one thing, the reference to the Whiskey Rebellion brings to mind a major incident of domestic friction not only over issues of taxation but also over the legal framework of a democratic society. By having Captain Flashet—a character bordering on caricature—proudly proclaim Washington's "quelling [of] the whiskey insurrection" (22), Murray avoids attaching to it more political gravity than a social comedy would allow. Nevertheless,

the implications of the need for social order and compliance to the laws of the government become clear.[21]

Furthermore, there is a passing mention of the mechanics as an emerging urban class with expanding economic horizons. In Maitland's words, "[h]ad Charles taken it into his head to have fallen in love with the cherry-cheek'd daughter of any reputable mechanic, with whom I could have clubb'd the difference and met on the true point of brotherhood, I might, perhaps, have been satisfied" (17). Maitland's reference to the mechanics hints at the Federalists' courting of the mechanic community for continued political support. While in the first years of the Republic, mechanics of all ranks sided with the Federalists' plan for the creation of a strong nation with an international appeal, by the 1790s they were gradually drawn closer to the Democratic Republicans' more liberal ideology that promised a decentralized power-structure and a transition from a privileged economy to a more egalitarian one (Rock 71-72).[22]

Gender Politics in *The Medium*

With the political atmosphere of the 1790s pervading Murray's sentimental comedy, the political call for a national consciousness that would balance assertive individuality with public morality blends with the emergent cultural discourse of domesticity. Ostensibly moving within the confines of the domestic sphere, the women in the play embody both the dynamic optimism of republican rhetoric and the shortcomings inherent in the implementation of its democratic tenets.[23] *The Medium* focuses on a specific group of Ameri-

21 The Whiskey Rebellion (1791) refers to the tax on all distilled products that the Federalist government under George Washington imposed. American farmers resisted the tax, very often by resorting to violence against federal officials. However, the political connotations of this measure were far deeper than a tax injuring the economic interests of a certain part of the population. The Federalist government made open accusations against Democratic Republican societies for fueling the revolt; see Kornblith and Murrin 54.

22 See also Young.

23 Although the Revolution had provided the political framework for American women to envision a distinct social role for themselves, the reality was deeply disappointing. As Joan Hoff has argued, "there is no conclusive evidence that the War of Independence made married women bona-fide citizens of the new republic or that the legal status of married or single women improved significantly in other less tangible areas of civil life in the first three or four decades following the end of the War of Independence" (49).

can women—upper-class, educated women—underlining their common concerns and aspirations. While Murray returns to the issue of women's education in the play, she does so as part of her larger socio-political vision of an ordered republic with civic-minded citizens.[24] For Murray, lack of education for both American men and women signals an alarming possibility of cultural disorientation in the midst of the new nation's quest for an identity. As Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen have pointed out, "Murray has no patience for those illiterate 'unlettered' blank slates who are dangerous in a democracy" (180). In *The Medium*, although Captain Flashet's ignorance and self-important airs mark him as a ridiculous figure, his lack of education fuels serious anxieties about the future of the American Republic. Captain Flashet's distorted use of language inspires intense worry about the ability of American citizens to comprehend the new national standards and to live up to republican expectations.[25] When it comes to the women characters, Miss Dorinda Scornwell is Captain Flashet's female counterpart in her pretentiousness and ignorance:

> CAPT. F: […] you are the quintessence of all loveliness, and your beauty exceeds even that of Medusa!—that head becomes you infinitely—and, if I believed in fairies, I should conceive you to be the divine Erebus, whom the fiddler Jason, with his golden bow, redeemed from the lower regions, whither she had sailed with King Agamemnon, after his conquest of Bohemia.
> MISS SC: I am no reader, Sir; and, of course, these are names, which are not familiar to me—Were they English, French, or Spanish, Sir? (68, original emphasis)

However, in Miss Scornwell's case, her superficiality and snobbish adherence to etiquette hide a problematic personality untouched by the regenerative impact of republican discourse. Her poor judgment and arrogance prevent her from acknowledging Eliza's exceptional character, contemptuously discarding her as "a low bred girl," "a kind of upper servant" (72). Blinded by her jealousy

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24 This is a position held by both Federalists and Democratic Republicans who believed that an educated citizenry was essential for the survival of the American Republic; see Wagoner 31-43.

25 The fear of the vulnerability of all republics was also expressed by Mercy Otis Warren in her romantic tragedies *The Sack of Rome* (1790) and *The Ladies of Castile* (1790). In both cases, the republics collapse through the degeneration of language and morals. For more information on the close connection between political issues and the use of language in the early Republic, see Gustafson; Kramer.

for Eliza, she speaks ill of her to Colonel Mellfont, exhibiting a vindictive attitude:

> COL. M: I was informed she was a young person of superior worth and accomplishments.
> MISS SC: It is a gross misrepresentation, Sir; […]
> COL. M: Your sentiments, Madam, are a perfect contrast to those of Charles Maitland; and you forgive me, if, in a point so nice, I suspend my judgment. […] [Exit Colonel Mellfont profoundly bowing.]
> MISS SC: Audacious, ill-mannered fellow! But this same dirt-sprung Eliza of their's [sic] shall pay for all. Yes; I will be revenged, if it is in the power of a woman's tongue to speak those daggers, the wounds of which are mortal! [Runs off precipitately.] (73)

The antipode of Miss Scornwell is the aptly named Matronia Aimwell, a female paragon of virtue, modesty, and reason. Matronia is a middle-aged single woman who embodies the possibility for an alternative social role for American women, one that is not frowned upon by society but highly esteemed. When Matronia first appears in the play, she has come to talk business with Mr. Maitland:

> MATR: I have invested the whole of my property in a bank stock—I have immediate occasion for one thousand pounds, for which I will give you my note; there are some formalities attendant on drawing money out of our public repositories, which I am willing to spare myself; and, if you can conveniently furnish me with this sum on my engagement that it shall be returned to you in one month, the purpose, the whole purpose [bowing.] of my visit here this morning, will be pleasingly answered. (24-25, original emphasis)

Matronia's determination and acumen are sharply juxtaposed with Maitland's ridiculous assumption that she has come with the intention of making a marriage proposal to him:

> MATR: Well, this is singular, upon my word; ha, ha, ha, truly ridiculous. It is beyond a doubt, that this good old gentleman supposed me a candidate for the vacant place in his elegant mansion! Surely it should teach me a lesson; for, if pursuits, far from being reprehensible, and a purpose that indisputably wears the garb of virtue, cannot shield from injurious suspicion, how are the votaries of folly exposed to the multiplied shafts of censure! Unhappy sex!

> Whose ways are environed with peril; surely we should not fail hourly to invoke the guardian care of attending angels. (25)

Although Matronia laughs at this misunderstanding, she nevertheless realizes the precarious social position of women who remain vulnerable in a society still entrenched in gender bias. However, Maitland's rather dismissive comments that "*women are women*" and "there is no calculating *the caprices of the sex*" (23, original emphasis) are undercut both by Matronia's own prudence and discretion and his own rashness to draw unfounded conclusions when it comes to judging women, just like he did with Eliza. In the line of female characters, Matronia stands out as an early example of an independent woman who moves with ease and confidence within the domestic and public spheres. She successfully combines her autonomous existence with her dedicated commitment to the well-being of her niece's family. At no point does she forsake women's domestic role and marital obligations. She supports the more "republican" view of marriage as a woman's choice based not only on love but also on respect and admiration. When she finds out that her niece, Mrs. Bloomville, married a "worthy" man without really loving him, but because her "vanity was flattered" (76), her advice becomes catalytic:

> MATR: […] you betrayed the tender confidence and fond attachment of a worthy man!—implanted mid his fairest hopes the bitter seeds of anguish, and did him a most heinous injury
> MRS. B: Tell me, revered woman, thou who formed my youth to virtue, is there no way by which I may recover the path of honour?
> MATR: […] let your husband's wishes become your future study, and rectitude shall once more crown your hours. […] Respect your husband's virtues—dwell on each splendid trait that marks his character; if he has faults, extend the ready mantle; let them not harbor in your bosom; but, far as you may, erase them from remembrance. (77-78)

The ending of the play offers a proper melodramatic denouement with Mrs. Bloomville totally reformed after following Matronia's advice about proper wifely conduct. Moreover, Eliza is finally united with Charles with the blessings of Maitland, Miss Scornwell apologizes for her unjust behavior, Captain Flashet remains conveniently absent, and "virtue" reigns "triumphant" in American society. Hence, the ending of the play smoothes over political dissonance and ideological discrepancy and leaves an aura of optimism with

most of the characters having reached a point of reformation and awareness as they converge toward the abstract ideal of personal and public virtue.

Conclusion

Despite the tenuous position of theater in the post-revolutionary United States, dramatic writing was invested with special significance as a direct response to the cultural call for a distinctly American drama and the political need to mold public understandings of a republican American identity. Plays like Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787) and William Dunlap's *The Father; or, American Shandyism* (1789) and *André* (1798) were a most welcome addition to the largely British repertoire of plays performed on the American stage in the late eighteenth century. Although early American playwrights relied heavily on the stylistic devices of European drama, the content of their plays promoted an incipient, yet vibrant, nationalistic rhetoric of American exceptionalism through patriotic effusions and evocations of revolutionary ideals. In a similar vein, the handful of American women who ventured into playwriting in the post-revolutionary years found in the theater a public forum for articulating their own vision of the changing American society and culture. The plays by Mercy Otis Warren, Susanna Rowson, and Judith Sargent Murray not only exhibit an acute awareness of the historical events of the time and their political significance, but also bring the question of women's social role into an ideological framework of republican regeneration, individual liberty, and empowerment.

In *The Medium*, the republican discourse of the American Revolution merges with Murray's gender concerns, political beliefs, and class consciousness framing the image of a society in the process of social and cultural redefinition. It is within this context that Murray finds in the theater the space to align the concept of republican womanhood with the revolutionary ideas of personal freedom and equality. Despite the still precarious position of women in American society, Murray offers an image of femininity that exhibits emotional strength, self-fulfillment, and sound judgment. Without denouncing modesty as the most valued defining principle of femininity and the domestic sphere as the most cherished realm of women, Murray's female characters are given a space for maneuvering in their options and decisions without compromising the norms of respectability and propriety. Matronia and Eliza, both in their own distinct ways, seem to have internal-

ized the spirit of personal autonomy so pervasive in the public discourse of the time. Even Mrs. Bloomville, who initially shows a rather irresponsible stance toward her marriage, embarks on a process of self-awareness and reformation, instigated by Matronia's sensible instructions, and achieved through her own capacity for critical thinking. Miss Scornwell, whose lack of substantial education has reduced her to a ridiculous—yet bitter—figure, is effectively contained at the end of the play where it is made pretty clear that the dawning American society is one that rewards people with integrity and dignity rather than people with misguided values and blind adherence to social pretensions.

What makes *The Medium* a particularly intriguing sample of early American dramatic writing—apart from the fact that it was written by a woman—is its political complexity in the sense that it uncovers a web of social relationships, cultural attitudes, and ideological positions. By writing a play—and expecting to see it produced—Murray steps into the public world of theater and politics more daringly and assertively. In a way, she abandons the safety of her previous writings, engages with a genre that has a more direct appeal to people, and successfully explores the emotional intensity and didactic force of dramatic dialogue. *The Medium* moves beyond its obvious affiliation with the concept of republican womanhood and exhibits Murray's keen understanding of the subtle issues at stake in a society still in a transitional phase of political redefinition and cultural restructuring.

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The Theatricality of Sexual Difference in Late-Eighteenth-Century America

Deborah Sampson's Staged Gender Masquerade

Astrid M. Fellner

Early American theater constituted an important site for women as performers as well as women as playwrights. Committed to the ideal of liberty, playwrights like Susanna Rowson and Mercy Otis Warren wielded their pens on behalf of independence and created plays that featured strong patriotic women. The stage offered possibilities to women for performing new public roles, allowing writers as well as performers to explore the boundaries of gender. Instrumental in the production of sexual difference, the stage in the early Republic constituted an important arena in which to negotiate the difficult questions of national and gender identity. As Sarah E. Chinn has argued:

> Supporters of the theater saw within it the potential for civic education and engagement, the training of Americans toward virtue. For many American men, especially men in the expanding working classes, the stage was the site in which concerns about identity, masculinity, political power, and the relationship of the self to others and the individual to the group were worked through. (4)

The theater might have been "predominantly a male arena" (Chinn 3) in which the category of "manliness" was "a necessary attribute of the American stage" (Chinn 1), but it was also an important site for women who tried to challenge dominant definitions of sexual difference. As playwrights like Royall Tyler and William Dunlap participated actively in the efforts of creating a decidedly "American" theater, they ensured that this definition also relied heavily on a dichotomous, relational mode of defining gender, and thus contributed to the process of constructing sexual difference, which was then used to justify sep-

arate and unequal spheres of work and life.[1] This gendered split between the masculine realm of public life and the feminine world of domesticity was not, however, always neatly naturalized in plays, and some women dramatists offered criticism against the naturalization of sex and gender, focusing on their roles as independent women. Mrs. Marriott's *The Chimera; or Effusions of Fancy: A Farce in Two Acts* (1795), for instance, presents the story of the free-willed, "unsex'd" Matilda, who disguises herself as submissive and docile in order to display manly qualities and voice her independence.[2] The most important female playwrights who offered criticism were, however, Judith Sargent Murray, Susanna Rowson, and Mercy Otis Warren. Warren's *The Ladies of Castile* (1790), for instance, presents a strong female character, Donna Maria, who takes up the sword in war. Her plays, as Jeffrey H. Richards suggests, "are not just about women and in fact make few assertions about their being a woman, but they serve as a register for the often insoluble contradictions of how a woman in America is represented in dramatic, or even theatrical, form" (14). Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* (1794) also asserts female independence. This play, which deals with the capture of American sea travelers by the Barbary pirates, is deeply concerned with issues of oppression and freedom, bringing forth strong arguments in favor of female independence. Making powerful statements on the situation of women in the early Republic, these plays link the ideals of the revolutionary cause to issues of gender.

With its potential to visualize and dramatize bodies and the effects of gender ideology, the stage offers a unique context for displaying the constructedness of gender. Performance, performativity, and theatricality are closely related, and this essay will have a closer look at the connections between gender performance and the theatricality of sexual difference on the post-revolutionary stage. It will do so by analyzing the staged gender masquerade of Deborah Sampson. On stage, the performance of gender is doubled, allowing the actor

1 Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787) is a case in point. The first play written by an American to be performed at a professional theater, *The Contrast* tellingly relies on a paradigm of difference to explain a series of contrasts, most notably between Europe and America, country and city, and "man" and "woman."

2 Sarah Marriott was a Scottish actress who played for one year with the Old American Company (1794-95). However, neither her acting nor her play created much interest during her time. *The Chimera* was only performed once in Philadelphia and once in New York; see Richards 32.

to expose the theatricality of sexual difference.[3] When acts of cross-dressing and enactments of the female body are publicly staged, this duplication becomes especially apparent. Due to the open possibility of transformation, staged cross-dressing becomes a spectacle, "in either direction by maintaining an in-between doubleness, a state of being that could potentially (but not yet) resolve into masculine or feminine" (Gorman 10). As Elizabeth Maddock Dillon reminds us, theater "by its very nature, conveys meaning by operating at the intersection of embodiment and representation—by coupling physical presence and mimetic reference" (50). On stage, she argues, the "relation between embodied (ontic) persons and represented (mimetic) subjects is definitionally in play" (11). It is the possibility of performance to invent strategies for re-imagining and disturbing the process of naturalization of sexual difference that I aim to assert in my analysis of Sampson's on-stage appearances. Participating in "the double nature of theatrical signification" (Dillon 51), Sampson's performance, I want to argue, exposes the arbitrariness of the sex/gender system through masquerade.

Relying on the technique of cross-dressing, early American dramatists offered examples of women acting like men, engaging in a powerful critique of the gendered character of freedom in post-revolutionary America. Compared with the English tradition, instances of cross-dressing in early American literary texts in general may be relatively scarce, but there are some important depictions of gender-ambiguous bodies, manly women characters, and cross-

3 While I want to distinguish between theater as a concrete place, institution, and art form and theatricality as a trope, I am aware of the elusiveness of the term "theatricality" and the unsettled tensions between the concepts of "theatricality," "performance," and "performativity." Borrowing the term "performativity" from theater studies in order to formulate her gender theory, Judith Butler argues that "[t]he acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts" ("Performative Acts" 521). Famously, Roland Barthes has defined theatricality as "theater-minus-text," that is "a density of signs and sensations built up on stage starting from the written argument" (25). Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis write that the term theatricality "can be defined exclusively as a specific type of performance style or inclusively as all the semiotic codes of theatrical representation" (1). In my analysis of Sampson's staged gender masquerade, I use the terms theatricality and performativity, the citational practice which reproduces and/or subverts discourse, almost synonymously. I particularly use the term theatricality when I want to engage that term's "longstanding association with the figural as well as longstanding debate about the intentionality of the actor" (Jackson 209). For the theoretical complications of the notions of theatricality and performativity, see Shannon Jackson's "Theatricality's Proper Objects."

dressing instances in post-revolutionary literature.[4] Conspicuously, instances of disguise and travesty in late eighteenth-century Anglo-America are mostly associated with either the Revolutionary War or the experience of captivity. The American Revolution and the struggles over the Constitution contributed to a re-ordering of society and opened up an avenue for the discussion and reevaluation of gender relations. Although fears of "unsex'd women" soon began to dominate public discourse, manly women still made their appearances in cultural representations.

From the well-known heroic female soldiers like Hannah Snell to the infamous Chevalier D'Eon, historical cases of changing sex attracted great attention in the Atlantic world in the early modern period. The late eighteenth century, on both sides of the Atlantic, witnessed paradigmatic changes in the conceptions of sexuality, gender, and the female body, according to which the view of sexual difference as an ontological difference between "man" and "woman" became increasingly dominant. The performativity of sex/gender can be registered in the frequent instances of cross-dressing and gender masquerade, which expose the constructed nature of sex/gender and express points of structural resistance to the beginning corporealization of "natural" gender differences at the turn of the century. Historically, there were a series of poor white women who cross-dressed as men in order to serve in the American Revolutionary War. Ann Bailey, for instance, enlisted in the Continental Army under the name of "Samuel Gay," and Anne Smith adopted the name of "Samuel Smith" (see Weyler 146). Both women were, however, severely punished for their behaviors and were tried for fraud. There is only one historical figure who achieved fame, earning accolades for her brave deeds: Deborah Sam(p)son Gannett (1760-1827).[5] Unlike the others,

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4 Apart from Mann's *The Female Review. Life of Deborah Sampson* (1797), other interesting cases of literary cross-dressing can be found in the anonymous *The History of Constantius and Pulchera* (1797), K. White's *A Narrative of the Life, Occurrences, Vicissitudes, and Present Situation of K. White. Compiled and Collated by Herself* (1809), Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism* (1801), and Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond* (1799).

5 Although often spelled Sampson in historical accounts, the correct spelling of Deborah's maiden name is Samson. Since I am not so much interested in the actual historical person as in the stage character and the performed person and since most studies use the name Sampson, I will refer to her as Deborah Sampson throughout my paper. In 1784, she was married to Benjamin Gannett, a farmer from Sharon, Massachusetts, which is why the *Address* carries the name Gannett as its author, even though it is unlikely that Sampson really penned this public lecture. Like *The Female Review*, her mem-

Sampson used her embodied self and, through a carefully crafted act of gender performance on the American stage, managed to transform herself into a celebrity.[6]

The written speech for Sampson's lecture tour, *An Address Delivered with Applause*, and her public performances in theaters in New England and eastern New York between March and October 1802 offer important sites for the investigation of tensions concerning gender identities in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century America. I want to treat Sampson's lecture as a dramatic performance because, on the one hand, her lecture was performed in conjunction with other theatrical productions, and, on the other, because her address was fashioned as a performative piece and was performed in front of an audience. As a cross-dresser, Sampson was a spectacular sight on stage and her/his gender identity was captured in a state of potentiality, hinging on the question of whether her/his gender performance referred to the world beyond the theater or whether it served to make the theatrical aspects of her/his presentation explicit. The gender trouble s/he caused on stage was exacerbated by the fact that the audience had heard of Sampson's real-life experiences as a soldier. It is this act of self-stylization performed both on and off stage that contributed to Deborah Sampson's fame.[7] I read Samp-

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oir, which was written by Herman Mann, this address was also drafted by him. For biographical information, see Lucy Freeman and Alma Halbert Bond's *America's First Woman Warrior*, which is a romanticized account of her life, including pictures of Sampson's hometown. Alfred F. Young's *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* is a scholarly biographical account of Deborah Sampson, in which he has uncovered the story of the historical person, disentangling the layers of fiction that have surrounded her person.

6 Following Greta LaFleur, I will rely on the personal pronouns "she" and "her" when I refer to Sampson during the times she lived as a woman, but use both "she/her" and "he/his" when talking about her performance as Robert Shurtliff, one of the names Sampson used in the military (see *Natural History* 141). I will also use "she/her" and "he/his" when I speak about Sampson's real-life performance on stage as Sampson/Shurtliff.

7 For more details on why Sampson, in contrast to the other female soldiers who fought in the American Revolution, achieved fame, see Karen Ann Weyler's chapter in *Empowering Words*, "Becoming 'The American Heroine': Deborah Sampson, Collaboration, and Performance." According to Weyler, there were four factors which contributed to her success at becoming a celebrity: "first, her ability to fulfill expectations for both masculine and feminine virtues; second, her strategic deployment of male intermediaries to speak for and represent her in the public sphere; third, her understanding of the performative nature of gender; and, finally, and most important, her keen awareness of the importance of print in shaping public opinion" (145). My article does not so

son's staged cross-dressing as a cleverly disguised expression of her/his fluid gender identity which in a subversive manner exposes the constructedness of sexual difference. Engaging in the theatricality of sexual difference, Sampson's performance draws attention to a general question concerning the status of representation in theatrical mimesis. As Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis sum up this debate: "Does dramatic performance refer beyond itself to the world or does it serve to make explicit the theatrical aspects of presentation?" (13).

Referred to as the American Jeanne d'Arc,[8] Sampson managed to stylize herself into a heroic and successful cross-dressing figure by putting on a sophisticated and subversive performance of sex/gender, which functioned as a camouflaged form of criticism that did not offend dominant hegemonic cultural expectations of gender as it excused cross-dressing as a necessary part of patriotic devotion. Sampson's performance of her/his story as a female warrior on the stage,[9] I argue, used the "unnaturalness" of gender transgression in order to criticize the naturalization of sexual difference and enacted a potent intervention into the public discourse on gender and the roles of women in the new Republic. Carefully and shrewdly negotiating dominant discourses on gender, which also included a keen awareness of the workings of female

much focus on the historical Deborah Sampson as it aims at exposing the theatricality of sexual difference in Sampson's appearance on stage, which constituted a powerful intervention into the process of the consolidation of sex/gender in post-revolutionary America.

8 In her 1848 three-volume work *The Women of the American Revolution*, Elizabeth F. Ellet wrote about Deborah Sampson, stating that it "cannot be denied that this romantic girl exhibited something of the same spirit as Joan of Arc, the lowly herdsmaid who, amid the round of her humble duties, felt herself inspired with resolution to go forth and do battle in her country's cause—exchanging her peasant garb for mail, helmet, and sword" (Diamant 35). In fact, it was Philip Freneau, who first described Sampson as a "faithful amazon" who fought "with the same vigorous soul inspired / As Joan of Arc, of old, / With zeal against the Briton fired, / Her spirit warm and bold / She march'd to face her country's foes" (183). In 1983, Deborah Sampson was declared "Official Heroine of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" by Governor Michael Dukakis.

9 Narratives of female warriors were well-known in eighteenth-century Anglo-America. In *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry*, Dianne Dugaw has identified more than one hundred different "female warrior" narratives printed primarily in Great Britain between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Female warriors, according to her, "were an imaginative preoccupation of the early modern era, appearing not only in popular street ballads but in a host of other genres as well: epic, romance, biography, comedy, tragedy, opera, and ballad opera" (1).

virtue, Sampson relied on the help of men with whom she collaborated in order to achieve the sympathy of her audience and shape public sentiment in her favor. As a result, Sampson's performances constituted a subversive act of self-fashioning which exposed the politics (and polemics) of gender on the post-revolutionary stage.

Gender Masquerade in Post-Revolutionary America

Deborah Sampson's performance of sexual difference can be taken literally: she cross-dressed and enacted her own body on the post-revolutionary stage. In doing so, she drew attention to the dissonance between sex and performance because the "natural" sex of the performer was not the same as the gender being performed. Cross-dressing and drag are modes of queer performance that subversively cite ostensibly natural signs of gender, eschewing the notion that sex can be directly read off the body. Obscuring the transparency of "natural" sex which is inherent in the body, cross-dressing destabilized the process of the establishment of the body as a marker of sexual difference by dramatizing incoherence in the ostensibly stable links between sex/gender/desire. Masquerade, as many feminist critics long have argued, can serve as a powerful metaphor for the construction of gender categories. Already in her 1929 essay "Womanliness as a Masquerade," Joan Rivière argues that it is impossible to separate masquerade from womanliness. For her, femininity is always already a form of masquerade, a construct that depends, for reasons social and political as well as erotic, upon masks. Famously, Judith Butler has built on this concept of masquerade when she argues that gender is a performance, in that it constitutes the identity it is purported to be. As she suggests:

> Consider that a sedimentation of gender norms produces the peculiar phenomenon of a "natural sex" or a "real woman" or any number of prevalent and compelling social functions, and that this is a sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another. If these styles are enacted, and if they produce the coherent gendered subjects who pose as their originators, what kind of performance might reveal this ostensible "cause" to be an "effect"? (*Gender Trouble* 140)

Masquerade and cross-dressing cut gender off from its presumed origins in biological difference and thus turn it into performance. As Butler says: "If gender attributes […] are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal" (*Gender Trouble* 141). The attributes that are ascribed to men and women thus constitute our conception of man and woman. Herein lies the attraction of camouflage and cross-dressing for women, who use these techniques in order to gain self-authorization. More importantly, cross-dressing allows women "male" freedom, enabling them to leave the confines of the domestic sphere.

In "Women on Top," Natalie Zemon Davis argues that in early modern Europe, carnival and the image of the carnivalesque woman "could *undermine* as well as reinforce" (131, original emphasis) the renewal of existing social frames. As she suggests, the image

> of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place. On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest. Play with an unruly woman is partly a chance for temporary release from the traditional and stable hierarchy; but it is also part of the conflict over efforts to change the basic distribution of power within society. (131)

Representations of women-on-top may "clarify the social structure by the process of reversing it" (Davis 130) or they may constitute a form of disobedience that undermines the order of society. The gender hierarchy of the eighteenth century clearly limited women's participation in the public sphere, so pretending to be a man often constituted an empowering act, opening doors to other possibilities. As Julie Wheelwright explains in *Amazons and Military Maids*, stories of popular woman warriors were typically about working-class women who joined the military for many different reasons. Generally, they "were unconventional women who spent their lives rebelling against their assigned role before they pursued a male career. Most could only conceive of themselves as active and powerful in male disguise" (19).

As I want to suggest here, Deborah Sampson's gender masquerade was also an empowering act, which was successful in two ways. On the one hand, it ensured her financial compensation in the form of a federal invalid pension for the battle wounds she had sustained during the Revolution, and it helped her achieve fame. On the other, it managed to destabilize traditional

hierarchies, drawing attention to the importance of sexual difference and the female body in the making of the new nation. In my study *Bodily Sensations: The Female Body in Late-Eighteenth-Century American Culture*, I have argued that the American Revolution constituted a watershed moment in the making of the body in the United States, as the unsettling effect of the Revolution on the meaning of the body as a site of subjectivity created a need for the cultural inscription of bodily difference. Historian Thomas Laqueur has recorded the emergence of a new rhetoric about womanhood at the end of the 18th century in the Atlantic world, which gave new meaning to the concept of sexual differentiation.[10] Even though Laqueur has been criticized for assuming a complete break with previous ways of thinking, most scholars, as Greta LaFleur states, "nonetheless generally do concur that both colloquial and scientific understandings of the nonidentical 'nature' of manhood and womanhood crystallized in new and more formal ways during this era" ("Sex and 'Unsex'" 475). Difference, the opposition between "male" and "female," became the crucial point of political and economic pressure at that time, insuring the coordination of male and female bodies, and helping to distinguish between productive and non-productive practices as well as proper, virtuous, and immoral behavior. Anatomy and a physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man and the sexed body was transformed from "a sign of" to the "foundation for civil society" (Laqueur 157). The category "woman" came to occupy a special proximity to nature—women were referred to as "the sex"—and the female body was seen as radically different from man's body. Much of post-revolutionary literary production contributed to the dissemination of this view of sexual difference. Through its reiterated practices of normative racial and heterosexual imperatives, it was thus ideologically complicit in the consolidation of gender identities. Just as the sentimental novel and the genre of conduct books propagated the new female ideal and acted as guides for women and girls, "plays

10 In his discussion of a shift from a one-sex/flesh model to a two-sex/flesh model, Thomas Laqueur offers a detailed account of the history of sexual difference in Europe, showing that scientific perceptions of bodily differences have changed over time. While the differences between men and women in terms of their societal roles and position within the order of the cosmos had long been debated in Western culture, the bodily opposition between men and women, he claims, assumed a new meaning in the eighteenth century. My book *Bodily Sensations* is concerned with the various processes that contributed to the changing meaning of sex/gender and the establishment of the body as a marker of sexual difference in late-eighteenth-century America.

functioned as a kind of conduct literature for workingmen" (Chinn 7). The appearance of manly women and female warriors on stage, however, exposed the constructed nature of sex/gender, expressing points of structural resistance to the corporealization of "natural" gender differences. Performance, as Elin Diamond has it, "is the site in which performativity materializes in a concentrated form, where the 'concealed or dissimulated conventions' of which acts are mere repetitions might be investigated and reimagined" (47). For Sampson, the stage was therefore the ideal site in which this female warrior could enact both embodied and representational selves.

As Sandra Gustafson points out, the female warrior figure "reached a zenith of her popularity in both England and America in the 1790s" (389). Conspicuously, when the two-sex-model became consolidated at the end of the eighteenth century, a decline soon followed in the popularity of women warriors (see Friedman-Romell 461). It is precisely during these turbulent times that Deborah Sampson appeared on the post-revolutionary stage. While Herman Mann's narrative *The Female Review*, which was published in 1797, highlighted that Deborah's cross-dressing stemmed from the worthy cause of the Revolutionary War and thereby contained the subversiveness of Sampson's behavior, Deborah Sampson Gannett's 1802 appearances on stage exposed her/him as a strong "masculine woman" who clearly wanted to challenge the status quo.[11] I concur with Robert Alan Brookey that Sampson Gannett "was more than a female soldier"; she was a woman who "succeeded in assuming a masculine identity, performing as a man in a masculine arena" (75). Shrewdly transforming the transgressive act of gender masquerade, Sampson adopted masculinity to showcase the performative nature of gender. Certainly, Sampson's motivation for masculine self-making can be read as more than a means to make money. Recent scholarly work has explored Mann's character in his *The Female Review* as a "'lesbian-like' protagonist" (La Fleur, "Precipitous" 94; *Natural History* 138). LaFleur, for instance, traces the important contribution of *The Female Review* to early American sexual epistemology: Mann's text is "rife with biological imagery and metaphor," she observes, "a narrative texture that sets *The Female Review* apart from contemporary representations of

11 According to Judith Jack Halberstam, the concept of the "masculine woman" can be theorized as female masculinity, which is a form of gender variance that falls within the purview of masculinity rather than femininity. Female masculine identity, Halberstam argues, is not an imitation of masculinity but a form of gender expression that constructs "masculinity without men." See *Female Masculinity* 1-43.

cross-dressing female soldiers" ("Precipitous" 98). With its focus on female masculinity, the text might also be interpreted as an early trans narrative, before the rise of sexology and more recent understandings of that term.[12]

America's First Warrior Woman

Deborah Sam(p)son was born on December 17, 1760, in the small village of Plympton, Massachusetts, close to Plymouth. Her parents were descendants of important founders of the Massachusetts Bay colony. While her mother, Deborah Bradford, was the great-granddaughter of William Bradford, her father was a descendant of Miles Standish and John Alden, and Priscilla Mullins (see Buchanan 7-8). Despite this prominent lineage, Deborah faced a childhood of hardship and poverty. During the Revolutionary War, she secretly sewed a set of men's clothes, hid in the woods to change out of her dress, and became a man. Adopting the name Robert Shurtliff, he enlisted in the Continental Army on May 20, 1782.[13] During a military engagement near Tarrytown, New York, he was wounded but treated his injury himself in order to prevent discovery that he was a woman. His sex was, however, discovered when he was hospitalized with a fever, and s/he was honorably discharged from the service in October 1783. Soon after the discharge from the army, a story in the *New York Gazette* was published of a successful masquerade in the American army: "An extraordinary instance of virtue in a *female soldier*, has occurred lately in the American army, in the Massachusetts line viz, a lively comely young nymph, 19 years old, dressed in man's apparel has been discovered" (qtd. in Young 4). Since Sampson remained poor all her life, she

12 Refraining from asking the question whether Sampson was a feminist, a queer person, or a trans person, LaFleur nevertheless is interested in how Sampson might have understood herself/himself, speculating: "If Sampson were alive today, he or she might be feminist, queer, *and* trans" (*Natural History* 141, original emphasis). In this chapter, I am not interested in the person of Deborah Sampson but in her/his performance of gender on the post-revolutionary stage.

13 As Weyler states, Sampson first enlisted under the name "Timothy Thayer" but had to change her identity after she got drunk at a tavern and her masquerade was discovered. The name that Sampson employed during her second enlistment is the one that appears in military documents and publications of the time. There exist various spellings, "among them Shurtliff, Shirtliff, Shurtlief, and Shirtlief" (264).

anxiously sought all possible income from lectures, books, and pensions. Petitioning the state of Massachusetts for pay and also petitioning Congress for a veteran's pension, she finally succeeded in obtaining a federal pension in 1805.[14]

Cooperating with Herman Mann (1770-1833), "a schoolteacher with literary aspirations" (Young 11), Sampson told Mann her story so that he could write her memoir. Published in 1797 as *The Female Review: or, Memoirs of an American Young Lady; whose Life and Character are Peculiarly Distinguished—Being a Continental Soldier, for Nearly Three Years, in the Late American War*, Mann's story about Sampson is "part memoir, part novel, part factual, in good part fantasy" (Young 11). Written in the tradition of the female warrior narrative, *The Female Review* displays many parallels with the English *The Female Soldier; or, The Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell* (1750). In fact, as Alfred F. Young states, there are so many parallels between the two works that it could have been the case that "he and/or Sampson were familiar with the English narrative" (14).

Mann clearly aligned Sampson's cross-dressing with her exceptional allegiance to her country, and he wanted his audience to realize that Sampson's cross-dressing stemmed from a worthy cause: "Those, who are unacquainted with masquerade," Mann explains, "must make a difference between that, which is to heighten beauty for fantastical amusement and pleasure—and that which is to continue, perhaps, for life, to accomplish some important event" (*Female* 129-30).[15] Mann stresses Sampson's intense patriotism, shaping, as Judith R. Hiltner puts it, "an icon of national virtue and a myth of the early republic from the raw material of a cross-dressing female soldier" ("Bled" 190). Unusual times call for unusual measures, this text implies, and

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14 A copy of Sampson's "Petition to the Governor, Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Jan. 11, 1792" is reprinted in John Adams Vinton's introduction to his 1866 edition of *The Female Review*; see xv-xxvii. For other records concerning Sampson's enlistment in the Continental Army, see Julia Ward Stickley, "The Records of Deborah Sampson Gannett, Woman Soldier of the Revolution."

15 My references are to the 1972 Arno Press edition, which is a reprint of Adams Vinton's 1866 edition, entitled *The Female Review, Life of Deborah Sampson, the Female Soldier in the War of the Revolution*. As Young states, there are four different versions of the *Female Review*: the one Mann published in 1797, an unpublished revision, a condensed version entitled "The American Heroine," which Mann's son wanted to publish, and Adams Vinton's 1866 edition (with an introduction and notes) of Mann's 1797 version. For more details, see Young 15-16.

in the case of Deborah Sampson it was, as Mann puts it, the unnatural event of the American Revolution that called for the "unnatural" act of donning the clothes of a soldier and fighting in the Continental Army. Presenting Sampson's story in the language of sentimental novelists, Mann paints a romanticized portrait, in which he alternately refers to Sampson as virago, female soldier, and American heroine.[16] Throughout the fictionalized story, Mann associates Sampson's act of cross-dressing with the virtue of heroic self-sacrifice. Sampson, he stresses, donned military garb out of the disembodied love of freedom. Because of love for her country, Sampson was able to transcend the "inadequateness of her nature" to "accomplish enterprises and attain objects unattainable by the efforts of the other passions" (*Female* 135).

It is obvious that Mann considers Sampson's enlistment in the army as an audacious move beyond her "nature." Her stage appearance, I argue, uses precisely the "unnaturalness" of gender transgression in order to criticize the naturalization of sexual difference. By transgressing fixed gender identities, Sampson revealed the performative nature of gender and exposed the constructedness of sexual difference.

The Celebrated Mrs. Gannett

In desperate need of money, Deborah Sampson—now married and called Mrs. Gannett—embarked on a lecture tour and started to deliver an oration, which was most likely also written for her by Mann, at a series of towns and cities throughout Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York in 1802 and 1803.[17] An estimated "1,500 people" paid to see and hear "the celebrated Mrs. Gannett" (Young 209). According to Dianne Dugaw, "stage demonstrations by women performers in military garb had become a popular theatrical convention, both in musical reviews as well as scenes in full length plays" (181-82). Famously, Hannah Snell had performed in London, speaking about her life as a soldier, and the fascination with these theatrical performances later spread to the United States. In the new Republic Sampson was, however, a pioneer when

16 Sampson was commonly referred to as an "American heroine" in newspapers of the day, a label that Freneau employed in his poem in her honor entitled "On Deborah Gannett." The designation "American heroine" also appears on the title page of Gannett's *Address Delivered with Applause*, the oration she delivered on stage.

17 For more details on the authorship of this text, see Hiltner, "Bewildered Star" 6-8.

standing on the platform and "daring to speak in public of her enlistment as a man in the Continental Army during an era women sat at home sewing, spinning or churning butter" (Freeman and Bond 189). Apparently, Sampson was also "a master of the art of self-fashioning, a would-be self-made woman" (Young 11-12), displaying a strong sense of the need to make her case public in order to secure help for a state pension. Hence her *Address* is full of appeals to the "brilliant and polite circle" that comprises her audience (Gannett, *Address* 7).

As the first woman in the United States to ever go on such a speaking tour (see Elmes-Crahall 383), Sampson entered uncharted territory. A woman in soldier's garb on stage during an entire oration was new on the American stage. Clearly, as an impoverished, female soldier who sought public attention, Sampson overstepped the boundaries of the dominant gender ideology of republican womanhood. As Freeman and Bond explain: "Traveling alone, keeping her own itemized expenses, she arranged her performances after she arrived in each town. She journeyed in private carriages, stagecoaches carrying the mail, once took a six-day wagon trip over rutted roads" (189-90). As her diary reveals, these journeys were stressful and left their mark on Sampson. The entries are full of reports of physical sufferings like digestive ailments, headaches, and toothaches. While Sampson's tour diary confirms that her motives in undertaking the project were to raise needed money for her family, it also shows that she enjoyed appearing on stage. On May 5, 1802, for instance, Sampson Gannett wrote that she was "much pleased in the appearance of the audience," being especially happy with "their serious attention" (*Diary* 11). At the same time, it was especially important to her to win the approval of "the Ladies" (*Diary* 12).

Sampson's tour lasted from June 1802 through the spring of 1803, and led her to perform in front of audiences in Boston and in a number of other northeastern towns and cities, including Providence, Springfield, Northampton, and Albany.[18] But even beyond her public speeches and stage appearances, Sampson's gender performances must have been a spectacle. When General Patterson, the commanding officer to Sampson during the war, was informed of Sampson's sex, he apparently remarked: "This is truly theatrical" (Wright

18 A list of Sampson's appearances can be found in her diary. See also the appendix to Freeman and Bond's *America's First Woman Warrior*, 211-14. According to Gustafson, Sampson also performed in New York City, a city that does not appear in her diary (see 384).

102). And in her own *Address*, Samspon Gannett relies on the metaphor of theater to describe her gender masquerade: "Thus I became an actor in that important drama, with an inflexible resolution to persevere through the last scene" (12-13).

"At five feet, seven inches in height, she made a convincing enough man in uniform" (Gustafson 385). While her appearance surely "heightened her audience's sense of incongruity" (Gustafson 385), the stagedness of her speech suggested the unreliability of surfaces and appearances. Conspicuously, the descriptions of her heroic acts, on the one hand, and her admission of the gender transgression that is entailed in such conduct, on the other, created an interesting tension in the *Address*. Oscillating between "aggressive challenges to gender and class conventions and self-conscious submission to them" (Gustafson 382), Sampson engaged in a play of duplicity that exposed the slipperiness of the sexed body. It is through "these acts of rhetorical and performative instability" (Gustafson 382) that Sampson used her/his own body to stage the debates on gender in post-revolutionary American theater. Her/his reliance on "convoluted syntax and multiple, contradictory rhetorics" (Gustafson 380) underlined the ambiguity and fluidity of Sampson's subversive gender masquerade.

Making her/his first appearance in the Federal Street Theatre in Boston in 1802, Sampson again donned a soldier's uniform years after the war and performed the soldier's manual exercise of arms on stage. The Boston performance of her/his oration and her/his staging of the manual exercise were especially spectacular because they appeared within the context of regular plays on a theater stage. Nothing in the tour, as Young states, "came close to the theatricality of her opening appearances in Boston late in March 1802, where for four nights spread over a week she was the star attraction at the Federal Street Theatre" (203). Each evening was carefully staged to pave the way for Mrs. Gannett's appearance. The company "set the mood with a popular play touching on a theme of her address: Frederick Reynold's *The Will; or a School for Daughters* (1797), the first night, March 22" (Young 204). *The Will* "featured a cross-dressing theme: Albina, the heroine, follows her loved one into the navy, masquerading as a naval officer, wielding both gun and sword" (Young 204-05). The second night, they played William Shakespeare's *King Henry the IVth with the Humors of Sir John Falstaff* (most likely a version of *Henry IV, Part 2*), and the third Thomas Morton's *The Way to Get Married* (1796). On the fourth night, there was *The Grand Historical Drama of Columbus; or, America Discovered* (1792, also by Thomas Morton) in which "Nelti, a Native American woman, fights

alongside her lover, saving his life" (Young 205). The featured plays, which involve elements of cross-dressing, all reflect the disruptive power that masquerade entails, but patriarchal order is established at the end of these plays. The Boston performances therefore took place in a theatrical context that, while highlighting the pleasures and the playfulness of gender masquerade, also stressed the renewal of existing social order (see Gustafson 395). Clearly, the institutional framing of her/his performance by other plays which contained the subversiveness of gender masquerade also affected the destabilizing potential of Sampson's disruption of gender categories. As Gustafson argues, the performances that Sampson gave outside the city, however, provided her/him with more personal freedom over her/his gender masquerade because these orations happened in "courthouses and Masonic halls without the elaborate companion pieces of her Boston appearances" (Gustafson 395-96). While the performance dimension of Sampson's lecture could unfold well on a theater stage, the sharing of the bill in Boston with plays which relied on masquerade in order to celebrate patriotism threatened the subversive potential of the performativity of gender categories that Sampson's performance highlighted.

Sampson's speech is divided into two parts, consisting of a narrative of her experiences in the Revolutionary War (18-26) and an explanation of her motivation for her conduct (27-32). As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has stated, Gannett's lecture combined two familiar genres, on the one hand, "the patriotic oration celebrating bravery and love of country" (480), a genre which was associated with "male discourse," and, on the other, the confession of a repentant sinner that functions as a moral warning to others, a "female genre" that dates back to Christine de Pizan's fifteenth-century book *The Treasure of the City of Ladies: or The Book of the Three Virtues* (480). However, as Hiltner adds, "a similar rhetorical form, the condemned prisoner's confession or 'last words,' had been popular in New England since the seventeenth century" ("Bewildered Star" 14). In the *Address*, Sampson reinvented herself, offering the public "at once an apology for her transgression and an assertion of pride in her achievement that might have astonished as well as alienated advocates of the 'rights of women'" (Young 197). Apologizing for her deeds, Sampson began to admit that the achievements were "a breach in the decorum of my sex, unquestionably; and perhaps, too unfortunately ever irreconcilable with the rigid maxims of the moralist" (8). This sentence, especially the word "unfortunately" highlights the texture of ambiguity characteristic of the entire speech, drawing attention to the internal conflicts of Sampson. In delivering a narration whose facts are

"uncouth as they are unnatural" (8), Sampson wants to present a "tale—the truth of which I was ready to say, but which, perhaps, others already said for me, ought to expel me from the enjoyment of society, from the acknowledgment of my own sex, and from the endearing friendship of the other" (6). But, as Gustafson has stressed, while Sampson got up on the stage and bowed "submissive to an audience" (Gannett, *Address* 6), "her submissiveness could not control the potentially destructive effects of her speech" (Gustafson 386), which, as Sampson was afraid of, might be "wounding to the ear of more refined delicacy and taste" (Gannett, *Address* 8).

Just as in *The Female Review*, Sampson justifies her masquerade in the *Address* when she says that she was inspired by the selfless love of freedom during revolutionary times:

> But most of all, my mind became agitated with the enquiry—why a nation, separated from us by an ocean more than three thousand miles in extent, should endeavor to enforce on us plans of subjugation, the most unnatural in themselves, unjust, inhuman, in their operations, and unpractised even by the uncivilized savages of the wilderness? Perhaps nothing but the critical juncture of the times could have excused such a philosophical disquisition of politics in woman, notwithstanding it was a theme of universal speculation and concern to man. (10)

Speaking in two distinct voices throughout her speech, Sampson simultaneously asserts her heroism and condemns her trespassing of the boundaries of woman's sphere. As Campbell suggests, because she thought of herself as "guilty by soldiering of a gross violation of the female role, only certain rhetorical options were available to her," which led her to combine a "patriotic oration of self-vindication with a confession and abject repentance" (491). Masking her life as a person who transgressed gender boundaries, her speech therefore engages in "a performance of female modesty" (Weyler 146). In her oration, then, she admits that "I am indeed willing to acknowledge what I have done, an error and presumption. I will call it an *error* and *presumption*, because I swerved from the accustomed flowry paths of *female delicacy*, to walk upon the heroic precipice of feminine perdition!" (23-24, original emphasis). The emphasis in her speech, however, demonstrates her awareness of the gendered character of freedom in post-revolutionary America. Sampson knows that if she were a man, she would have received praise for her actions:

> Had all this been achieved by the rougher hand, more properly assigned to wield the sword in duty and danger in a defensive war, the most cruel in its measures, though important in its consequences; these thorns might have been converted into wreaths of immortal glory and fame. I therefore yield every claim of honor and distinction to the hero and patriot, who met the foe in his own name; though not with more heartfelt satisfaction, with the trophies, which were most to redound to the future grandeur and importance of the country in which he lives. (24)

Willing to hide her fame and direct her praise to other heroes and patriots, Sampson asks for recognition of her deeds, couching her words in a subtle but clever criticism of the fate of women whose stories are silenced and obscured:

> Yet if even this deemed too much of an extenuation of a breach in the modesty of the *female world*—humilized [sic] and contented will I sit down inglorious, for having unfortunately performed an important part assigned for another—like a bewildered star traversing out of its accustomed orbit, whose twinkling beauty at most has become totally obscured in the presence of the sun. (25, original emphasis)

Now that Sampson could speak for herself on stage, she stressed that she wanted to free herself from the constraints of being a woman. Protected by a "cloak of patriotism" (Young 220), Sampson then could launch her critique of the status of women:

> Wrought upon length, you may say, by an enthusiasm and phrenzy, that could brook no control—I burst the tyrant bonds, which *held my sex in awe*, and clandestinely, or by stealth, grasped an opportunity, which custom and the world seemed to deny, as a natural privilege. And whilst poverty, hunger, nakedness, cold and disease had dwindled the *American Armies* to a handful—whilst universal terror and dismay ran through the camps […] did I throw off the soft habiliments of *my sex*, and assume those of the *warrior*, already prepared for battle. (12, original emphasis)

Assuming again the role of the woman warrior in her/his speech, Sampson enacted "two conflicting selves […] speaking in two competing voices" (Campbell 490). One can argue that every time that Sampson changed back into her/his military uniform on stage s/he managed to solidify her/his gender transition by reiterating her/his masquerade beyond her/his role as a soldier in the Revolutionary War. The theatrical setting of her public lecture—the the-

ater where actresses impersonated soldiers—may have contained Sampson's subversive transgression of gender boundaries, but it also provided her/him with a stage for her/his personal doubled act of gender imitation. For Sampson, the stage opened up a space in which a play between her/his embodied self and her/his representational self could be enacted. This visible mediation between Sampson's material body and her/his role-playing also drew attention to the constructedness and theatricality of sexual difference. Her/his sartorial performance denied the body as a locus from which to read off gender identity, presenting it rather as a battlefield upon which various conflicting constructions of gender and sexual identities are enacted. In his introduction to the printed text of the *Address*, Mann may have reinforced the theatrical dimensions of Sampson's performance when he claims that the speaker, in narrating her story, will revisit "the theatre of her personating the soldier" (3). "Yet the performance dimension of her tour—the costume, the arms drill, Gannett's substantial physical presence—both aestheticized her own role and invited members of her audience to recognize the republican woman as a figure requiring a similar, if less dramatic, kind of role-playing" (Gustafson 398). It is this act of deliberate cultural staging of her/his body, I argue, which enabled Sampson to give voice and visibility to that which has been silenced and erased in the written texts. On stage, Sampson could be in control of her/his oration, turning it into a spectacle by making use of the open possibility of transformation in either direction of "woman" or "man," at the same time upholding an in-between doubleness.

Sampson Gannett's lecture was not solely a public oral address. At the end of the lecture, s/he would perform the "Manual of Arms," a rifle drill, in full military uniform. This performance, as Brookey argues, "reintroduces the transgendered specter of Robert Shirtliffe" (77), undermining Sampson's attempt in her speech to apologize for her cross-dressing. While in the introduction to the *Address*, Mann stresses that Sampson was in "complete uniform" (4) during the manual exercise, one may speculate that at some venues Sampson also delivered her/his entire speech in male attire or at least in gender-ambiguous outfits. In the diary entry on her/his performance in Providence, for instance, Sampson indicates that she/he wore male clothing during the speech as well. Sampson writes that when she/he got up to deliver the *Address*, she/he heard several members of the audience swear that "I was a lad of not more than eighteen years of age" (11).

After finishing the address in Boston, Sampson would leave the stage and return "as the visible embodiment of her masculine alter ego dressed in the

buff and blue uniform of a Continental Army infantryman, complete with gun, and finish her rhetorical act by performing the manual of arms" (Campbell 490). The Federalist *Boston Gazette* ran an advance "Theatrical Notice" promoting her: "The appearance of the American Heroine is at least a subject of great curiosity," adding that "Madam D'Ens herself was not so great a phenomenon in character as this *Female Soldier*" (qtd. in Young 203, original emphasis). Sampson's performance on stage must have been groundbreaking. As Young states, "it is possible that she delivered her address with numerous gestures: spreading her arms wide, crossing them over her chest, pointing with her right hand to the heavens, or clasping hands in front when pleading" (219-20). Local newspapers referred to her style of delivery as "manly elocution," (qtd. in Young 220) and this type of elocution according to Ciceronian literary style, prescribed gestures (see Young 219-20). In the *Columbian Minerva*, Mann's Dedham newspaper, there appeared a piece under the heading of "Theatrical," in which the writer (probably Mann) described Sampson's performance:

> During an ingenious performance of a Comedy called *The Will or a School for Daughters* […] she rehearsed to a crowded and brilliant assembly, a remarkably pathetic sketch of her achievements during the time she personated a soldier. At the close of the farce, Mrs. GANNET, equipped in complete uniform, went though [sic?] the *Mannual Exercises*, attended by a company of officers. The whole concluded with the song and chorus, *God Save the Sixteen States*. On her entering the Stage an universal acclamation of joy involuntarily escaped the audience, and was repeated during the exhibition. (n.pag.)

Despite the fact that Sampson's oration "is filled with rhetorical contradictions, the combination of the *Address* and the military drill as a whole" (Weyler 160) fulfilled Sampson's purposes: It authenticated her story, restored her feminine virtue so that she could be seen as a heroine, contributed to her receiving a pension, and brought her fame. Sampson's example, therefore, shows how a woman in post-revolutionary America shrewdly managed to turn a transgressive act into a "gallant, quixotic, and patriotic gesture that future writers could construe as one of feminist liberation" (Weyler 148). With its self-conscious focus on theatricality, Sampson's *Address* cleverly exposed the constructedness of sexual difference, offering an important site for the investigation of sexual difference in post-revolutionary America.

Conclusion

As a space for women as performers and authors, the stage offered the possibility for women to assume new public roles. Often embodying the ideals of the nation, women performed their bodies and thus were able to performatively offer a critique of the situation of women in post-revolutionary America. Obscuring the transparency of "natural" sex which is inherent in the body, Deborah Sampson troubled the process of the establishment of the body as a marker of sexual difference by dramatizing incoherences in the ostensibly stable links between sex/gender/desire. At a time in the late eighteenth century when gender categories began to consolidate around the sexed body, performances that feature women trying to act like men are of particular importance as they draw attention to the making of sex/gender, demonstrating the performative quality of gender. Instances of cross-dressing expose the boundaries between the sexes as cultural, registering the flexibility and performativity of sexual difference. At the same time, the concern with cross-dressing also points to the instability of other categories. According to Marjorie Garber, cross-dressing indicates the existence of "a *category crisis elsewhere*, an irresolvable conflict or epistemological crux that destabilizes comfortable binarity, and displaces the resulting discomfort onto a figure that already inhabits, indeed incarnates, the margin" (17, original emphasis). And, indeed, in the case of Deborah Sampson, her act of cross-dressing also points to her marginality in terms of class. It is because of her poverty that she had to live and labor like a man; this, at least was "one of the prevalent explanatory narratives for the aberrant gendered behavior" (LaFleur, "Sex and 'Unsex'" 481). Outside of this particular class context, her decision to join the military, as LaFleur explains it, "could not necessarily have been culturally comprehensible, or might not have been widely socially celebrated" ("Sex and 'Unsex'" 481). Her cross-dressing then, as LaFleur argues, also serves as a reminder of the way that social, religious, and racial positioning inflect cultural expectations surrounding specific gendered behaviors, etiquettes, and dress" ("Sex and 'Unsex'" 480).

With its self-conscious focus on theatricality, Sampson's *Address* offers an important site for the investigation of the politics concerning gender identities in post-revolutionary America, a time when binary logic was briefly called into question at the very moment that it was firmly put into operation. American theater offered the possibility for women to transgress the gendered split between the masculine realm of public life and the feminine, domestic world. Through the depiction of the "unnatural" behavior of performing gen-

der which cuts gender off from its presumed origins in biological difference, Sampson's *Address* opened a gap through which the audience could see the contingency of gender and the performative character of the categories of "male" and "female."

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Sowing the Seeds of Virtue
Susanna Haswell Rowson's Contributions to Conduct Literature

Verena Holztrattner

The early Republic marks a highly formative period in American history. In the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, especially questions related to gender took center stage. With the dissolution of traditional gender hierarchies during the war, new roles had opened up for women—and many women were not willing to vacate them once the war was won, leaving the nation's returned patriarchs as well as hitherto unquestioned gender roles in a state of disarray.[1] The shared conviction that the Republic stood or fell with the virtue and proper conduct of its citizens further encouraged a close examination of the social roles of men and women at the time (Kierner 2); how, it was asked, should the independent American citizen look like, conduct themselves, and participate in the public and private life of the Republic, in order to secure its

1 The Revolution, Linda K. Kerber points out in *Women of the Revolution*, was "a strongly politicizing experience" (11) for American women. During the war, women frequently assumed public roles traditionally reserved to men: many were left in charge of family businesses and households; some assumed active roles in the Revolutionary War by forming supportive associations, such as the Ladies of Philadelphia, who sought to "render themselves more really useful" (Reed n.pag.) by collecting donations and sewing clothes for soldiers; yet others assisted the revolutionary cause by taking on positions as couriers and spies, or by traveling with the Continental Army as camp followers to tend to the wounded (Coletta n.pag.); the most ardent female revolutionaries, such as Deborah Sampson Gannett, even cross-dressed and joined the army in disguise (Rust 24). By shifting both women's and men's perception of women's abilities, rights, and roles in society, the Revolutionary War "radically changed women's place in the new republic" (Eldred and Mortensen 26); while this "new place" had yet to be delineated, the way had been cleared for a collective reassessment of by then outworn gender roles (see, for instance, Rust 23, 195; Kerber 12; Kritzer, "Playing" 150).

future existence. Gender roles and relations, in short, had to be renegotiated with an eye to the newly established American Republic and the needs of its citizens.

Efforts to provide Americans with gender models were as manifold and diverse as the authors who contrived them. Writers introducing themselves as concerned fathers, caring mothers, mentors, and friends set out to instruct young Americans, as Sarah E. Newton observes in her guide to American conduct books, "in the formation of good moral character and the acceptance of proper gender roles" (*Learning* 1). Texts of this kind are part of a highly popular (yet in the context of the early American Republic little examined) literary tradition: the advice or conduct tradition.[2] The best-known format within the conduct tradition is the conduct book, a highly didactic handbook "to right doing and right living" (Newton, *Learning* 11). Traditional conduct books are predominantly composed of prescriptive advice propagating and perpetuating conservative conceptions of the appropriate conduct of young men and women;[3] Donald Fraser's widely read conduct book *The Columbian Monitor*, for instance, includes a "recipe for agreeability" in women, listing "modesty, obedience, and complaisance" as a "good woman's" key "ingredients" (143); similar

2 The origins of conduct literature can be traced back as far as Renaissance Europe. In fact, the majority of conduct texts read in the American colonies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were imported from Europe (Hemphill 34; Kierner 10). Several British conduct classics were reprinted in America, such as Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* (1774), a conduct bestseller in both Great Britain and the U.S.; others found their way into American households in the form of conduct compendiums, that is, handbooks composed of excerpts from the most popular conduct texts at the time. Taken the strong popularity and wide dissemination of British conduct literature in colonial and (post-)revolutionary America, it is not surprising that little research has been done on the work of American conduct authors. However, originally American contributions to the conduct tradition offer, as shall be shown, intriguing insights into the complex processes of formulating new gendered standards of behavior for the citizens of the newly established Republic.

3 Conduct books read at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were generally written by and targeted at white middle-class men and women (Newton, *Learning* 4; Kierner 10). While Newton mentions some texts that addressed working-class readers (*Learning* 3), the great majority of conduct books at the time was targeted at a middling readership. African American readers would not be addressed in conduct literature until the second half of the nineteenth century. The texts to be discussed in this essay are exclusively concerned with the experience of white middle-class girls and women.

observations can be encountered in *Advice to the Fair Sex*, another prototypical American conduct book, which aims to "inculcate virtuous principles, […] refine manners, [… and] instruct the Fair Sex in the Duties of Life" (4). Through conduct books, Newton argues, guidelines for good behavior were "codified, legitimized, and institutionalized" (*Learning* xi); at a time when established social structures were in a state of flux, they were thus powerful literary vehicles in the forging of new gendered norms of behavior.

Conduct advice was not only disseminated through handbooks, however; several committed conduct writers turned to fiction, poetry, and drama in their attempt to promote "proper" gendered conduct in the most evocative, memorable, and entertaining ways. Though lesser-known today due to difficulties of categorization and definition, these literary conduct texts have doubtlessly played a significant role in reconceptualizing manhood and womanhood in the early Republic.[4] Each literary genre appropriated for conduct purposes offered not only a distinct set of rhetorical tools and strategies to writers but also what Daniel Chandler calls specific "frame[s] of reference" to readers (7)—both within and beyond the texts. These frames—most importantly genre conventions, but also genre-specific reception contexts—helped readers correctly interpret the texts' content and their authors' intentions (7). Conduct advice offered in novels or poems, for instance, both of which genres traditionally read in the privacy of the home, would have been received differently than conduct models embodied by actors on stage and witnessed collectively in the public space of theaters. Similarly, the polyvocality and dialogic structure of plays would have had different effects on audiences than the univocality of the lyric persona offering advice in conduct poems.[5]

One element unifying all conduct texts regardless of their genre is their authors' shared belief that young men and women ought to be *taught* their

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4 The heterogeneity of conduct literature coupled with the wide range of themes tackled in conduct texts has complicated the formulation of a clear-cut definition of the conduct genre. Some conduct writers, for instance, placed a stronger emphasis on courtesy and etiquette, producing texts which, according to Newton, ought to be categorized as "etiquette books" or "guides to gentility" rather than conduct books (*Learning* 4). While conduct texts may include advice on proper behavior in society, genuine conduct literature, Newton argues, primarily offers advice on proper conduct in life" (*Learning* 6).

5 While this simplified conception of genre has been legitimately challenged by scholars such as Jacques Derrida, who insisted on the impurity, the "madness of genre" (81), it is a useful way of looking at the different properties of novels, poems, and plays with conduct-related themes.

respective roles in society, that proper gendered conduct needs to be *learned*. Gender roles, by implication, were viewed as performative constructs constituted by learned acts, which, in the context of the early American Republic, were contrived, recorded, disseminated, and preserved by conduct writers.[6]

In this article, Susanna Haswell Rowson's contributions to the literary conduct tradition will be examined: *Mentoria; or the Young Lady's Friend (1791/1794); Slaves in Algiers; Or, A Struggle for Freedom (1794)*, *Miscellaneous Poems (1804)*, and *A Present for Young Ladies; Containing Poems, Dialogues, Addresses (1811)*.[7] Since the author's personal and professional aspirations are reflected in both content and form of her writing, the texts will be discussed in chronological order and with reference to the author's biography.

Rowson (1762-1824), one of the strongest female voices of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the U.S., was among the most fervent participants of the public renegotiation of gender roles. Her contributions to the conduct tradition stand out for several reasons. For one thing, Rowson probed the persuasive potential and conduct-related efficacy of virtually every literary genre and style in the course of her career. Convinced that "example is ever more efficacious than precept" (*Mentoria* 23), she deliberately turned away from the largely prescriptive conduct handbook format and instead interwove her views on proper conduct into novels, poems, dialogues, and plays. For another thing, Rowson, unlike most of her contemporaries, did not exclusively tap into the tried and tested "good-versus-bad" dichotomy but sought to offer complex gender models and sophisticated conduct advice. While she endorsed several traditional notions on appropriate conduct, she also cleared space for alternative and more permissive gender models. Her untiring efforts

6 Conduct authors' surprisingly progressive understanding of gender concurs with Judith Butler's theory on the performativity of gender. Roughly two centuries later, she postulated that bodies become their gender "through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" (523). Aware of the performative nature of gender, conduct writers hastened to provide scripts and scores to *direct* gender performance in the U.S. according to their social and moral visions.

7 Rowson's best-known publication, her novel *Charlotte Temple* (1791/1794)—dedicated, as the author explains in her preface, to (female) readers "who are so unfortunate as to have neither friends to advise, or understanding to direct them, through the various and unexpected evils that attend a young and unprotected woman in her first entrance into life" (5)—, also displays several qualities characteristic of conduct literature. In this essay, however, a focus will be placed on the author's lesser known yet equally intriguing contributions to the conduct tradition.

to shape an ongoing gender discourse as a teacher, poet, novelist, and playwright, and her determination to challenge fossilized conceptions of gender render her one of the most significant conduct writers of the early American Republic.

Rowson was particularly interested in the role of girls and young women, which is why her conduct advice is largely targeted at "the young and thoughtless of the fair sex" (5), as she puts it in the preface of her best-known publication, *Charlotte Temple*. With the exception of *Slaves in Algiers*, the texts to be examined in this article have received only little scholarly attention; all of them, however, offer intriguing insights into a flourishing conduct tradition, the first publicly staged gender debate in the American Republic, and Rowson's position within it as both an author and one of the earliest champions of female abilities and gender equality in the U.S.

Mentoria; or the Young Lady's Friend (London 1791/Philadelphia 1794)

> A girl just entering the state of womanhood […] is surrounded with innumerable dangers; her reputation is of as delicate a texture, and may be as easily injured, as the fairest blossom; […] too often those who most pretend to admire its sweets, will rudely pluck it from its parental stalk, deprive it of all its beauties, then throw it from them like a loathsome weed, leave it to perish unpitied and unregarded, and to be trod to the earth by every unfeeling passenger, who may perhaps cast on it a look of contempt, and cry, "Behold the once lovely." (Rowson, *Mentoria* 31-32)

Though born in England, Rowson spent most of her childhood in Massachusetts with her father, Royal Navy Lieutenant William Haswell. During the Revolution, however, the Haswell family, who refused to pledge allegiance to the revolutionary cause, was taken prisoner and, in 1778, sent back to England. Upon her return to England, Rowson assumed a position as a governess to support her family who was facing severe financial difficulties. It marked, as Wendy Lement notes, her "first encounter with teaching" (4), a profession which would henceforth occupy a constitutive role in her life and writing. *Mentoria; or the Young Lady's Friend* was both written and first published in London in 1791, and is perhaps Rowson's most conventional contribution to the conduct tradition. It is "a novel based on [Rowson's] experiences as

a governess" (41), Marion Rust claims, which perhaps explains the author's preoccupation with painfully naïve girls in the novel. Henri Petter bitingly (albeit not quite untruthfully) describes the anecdotes featured in the novel as "painfully predictable in descriptions and pathetic uses" (70); a closer look at their content and form, however, offers some compelling insights.

Mentoria is a two-volume-strong prototype of "usable fiction"—a term coined by Petter to describe texts which combine "an unobjectionable subject matter with the guise of fictional reports, correspondences, and narratives" (63).[8] Written, as Rowson explains in the preface, out of her "anxious desire" to assist young women in the cultivation of "amiable virtues" and the pursuit of "true happiness" in life (ii-iii), *Mentoria*'s "unobjectionable subject matter" is the conduct of girls on the verge of adulthood. The "fictional guise" Rowson deemed most suitable for this purpose is the epistolary format.[9] With the exception of a poem and a short fictional biography of the narrator to set the scene, *Mentoria* is composed of fictive letters, penned and/or compiled by the governess Helen Askham, or, as her fictional addressees and former charges,

8 Novels, albeit highly popular, were viewed with great suspicion in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century America. Benjamin Rush, for instance, warned against the corrupting effects of novels, especially sentimental novels, insisting that "[t]he abortive sympathy which is excited by the recital of imaginary distress, blunts the heart to that which is real" (12). His concerns were echoed by numerous prominent public figures at the time, most importantly Thomas Jefferson and John Turnbull, painter of "Declaration of Independence" (for a detailed survey on the hostility to fiction in eighteenth-century America, see Herbert Ross Brown's *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860*). Like many of her contemporary novelists, Rowson sought to deflect criticism stirred by the novel genre by adding to her texts lengthy "disclaimers" avowing the purity of her intentions. The poem featured on the title page of *Mentoria*, for instance, first and foremost seeks to appease potential skeptics and critics: "Detested be the pen whose baneful influence / Could to the youthful docile mind convey / Pernicious precepts, tell loose tales, / And paint illicit passion in such colours, / As might mislead the unsuspecting heart, / And vitiate the young unsettled judgement. / I would not for the riches of the East, / Abuse the noblest gifts of heaven thus, / Or sink my Genius to such prostitution." While the merging of fiction and conduct advice did indeed encourage "a more tolerant acceptance of imaginative writing" (Petter 63), Rowson still felt compelled to restate her high-minded intentions throughout the novel.

9 Rowson was by no means the only author to turn to the epistolary form in her effort to propagate her notions on proper conduct; Lord Chesterfield's previously mentioned *Letters to His Son* was constructed in a similar manner, as was the anonymous *Advice to the Fair Sex*, and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Boarding School; or, Lessons of a Preceptress to Her Pupils* (1798).

the daughters of Lord Winworth, call her, "Mentoria" (20). The voice Rowson adopts in the novel alternates between two tones: it is the voice of a mature friend, warm and benevolent, yet simultaneously the strict, strongly didactic, and often patronizing voice of a "preceptress" (21). Coherent storylines and traditional plot and character development are absent in *Mentoria*; as a hybrid between novel and conduct book, it relies, instead, on its epistolary frame to merge, as Newton notes, "lesson-giving letters and illustrative anecdotes into a more-or-less coherent whole" ("Wise" 147).

Conduct advice in these letters is largely interwoven with brief anecdotes featuring young women who stray from the path of virtue and are punished soundly for their transgressions. "A girl just entering the state of womanhood […] is surrounded with innumerable dangers" (31), Mentoria warns her charges in her second letter to them. It is one of many foreboding proclamations intended to impress upon her young, female addressees the importance of filial duty and the dangers of unregulated passion. Through the voice of Mentoria, Rowson endorses many contemporary ideals of appropriate female conduct; her largely sympathetic portrayal of female offenders and the wrongdoers' ability to recognize and repent their errors, on the other hand, sets them apart from the pure evil female wrongdoers depicted in most traditional conduct literature. In fact, Mentoria's chief fallen heroine, Agnes, attains an almost martyr-like status: "If thou hast any children, tell them my story" (75), Agnes implores Mentoria on her deathbed. "[T]each them to subdue their passions. We are incompetent judges of what will promote our own happiness. Oh! that I had never–" (75). Agnes's last request, namely that the story of her downfall be used to secure other women's future happiness, is an emphatic declaration of female solidarity and endows the penitent with a certain measure of heroic stoicism and selflessness—qualities not usually attributed to women straying from the path of virtue.

Slaves in Algiers; Or, A Struggle for Freedom: A Play, Interspersed with Songs, in Three Acts (1794)

> Bravo! Excellent! Bravissimo! Why, 'tis a little body, but ecod, she's a devil of a spirit. It's a fine thing to meet with a woman that has a little fire in her composition. I never much liked your milk-and-water ladies. (Rowson, *Slaves* 80; Sebastian about Fetnah)

"The stage is undoubtedly a very powerful engine in forming the opinions and manners of a people" (763), the American author and women's rights advocate Judith Sargent Murray observed in 1798, pinpointing one of the theater's key qualities in the post-revolutionary United States: its power to shape the views and guide the conduct of the citizens of the newly established Republic. The range of opinions and manners negotiated on stage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was wide: biting political satires and propaganda plays were performed alongside comedies of manner mocking imported fashion fads as well as dramatized commentaries on current events affecting life in the young Republic. Among the most pervasive topics raised in American drama at the time was identity, more specifically U.S. Americans' quest for a distinct national, political, cultural, and social "character." In the process of forging social identities appropriate for citizens of the Republic, the performative demarcation of gender roles assumed a particularly prominent place on stage. Many playwrights took advantage of the public interest in reassessing fossilized models of masculinity and femininity to advance their visions of American men's and women's places in the new social order. "As a forum for urban diversity, theater was a likely venue for the advocacy of female rights" (209), Rust notes—a venue especially female playwrights and actors explored and exploited for their own benefits.

Today, Rowson is chiefly remembered for her contributions to the early American literary canon as a novelist; in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by contrast, Rowson's popularity and high public profile were very much linked to her contributions to post-revolutionary American theater as an actress and playwright. Especially her engagement with the New Theatre in Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, and the Federal Street Theatre in Boston earned her considerable public recognition during her lifetime.[10] The foundations of Rowson's stage career were laid in 1792, when she and her husband William Rowson, who had previously been engaged as musician and actor in the Royal Horse Guards and at Covent Garden Theatre, started performing together in several British theaters. One year later, the Rowsons were recruited by Thomas Wignell and left for the United States as members of Wignell's

10 On the original title pages of several of Rowson's published novels the author is introduced as "Mrs. Rowson, of the New-Theatre, Philadelphia" (see, for instance, *Mentoria*; *Charlotte Temple*; *Trials of the Human Heart*). These biographical references suggest that publishers assumed that Rowson's (prospective) readers would recognize the author's name from playbills, reviews, or the stage.

and Alexander Reinagle's theater company, the New American Company. They performed in several American cities, including Annapolis and Philadelphia, before eventually settling down in Boston in 1796 to join John B. Williamson's theater company at the Federal Street Theatre.[11]

As an actress who had toured British and American theaters for several years, Rowson had a thorough understanding of the workings of theater and was well aware of the opportunities the stage offered. Her only extant play, the comedy *Slaves in Algiers*, was first performed at Philadelphia's New Theatre in 1794 and was received, according to Rowson, with "unbounded marks of approbation" (*Slaves* 56). *Slaves in Algiers* is a prime example of how drama can serve as an efficacious tool for the performative renegotiation of norms and the playful promotion of alternative ways of living. Aside from the much-discussed political and cultural dimensions of the play, Rowson's remarkably resourceful female characters and the unconventional gender role distribution within the play render *Slaves in Algiers* a particularly intriguing text. In the play, conduct advice is exclusively offered by way of example and is consequently less explicit than that found in traditional conduct texts; the absence of conduct precepts is compensated, however, by Rowson's compelling portrayal of women's qualities within the play, which makes her female characters powerful role models for her female audiences.

Although male characters outnumber female characters in *Slaves in Algiers*, Rowson's women are the ones who stick out.[12] It is them who sway the play's

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11 For more detailed accounts of the Rowsons' stage careers see Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans 123-28; Meserve 116-17; Dudden 9-11; Kritzer, Introduction to *Plays* 7-12; Seilhamer 143; Rust; Vail; and Nason.

12 The ethnic division of the female characters in *Slaves in Algiers* into Americans and Moriscans—that is, Algerians "educated in the Moorish religion" (60), as is explained in Act 1—adds a somewhat unexpected and highly intriguing dimension to the play; however, Rowson "Americanizes" the female Algerian characters so thoroughly that for the purpose of this analysis, the purported cultural divide will be disregarded. Fetnah, who, as we learn in the first scene of the play, drew her "first breath in England" (60), holds a "natural antipathy" (71) to "Algerian manners" and thus does not consider herself a "Moriscan" at all, and Zoriana emphasizes repeatedly that she is "a Christian in [her] heart" (67) and therefore determined to act in accordance with Christian values (70). Both Algerian women share the same set of ideals and traits as the American female protagonists Olivia and Rebecca and thus function just as much as role models for Rowson's American audiences. For a detailed discussion of the cultural, political, and racial dimensions of the comedy see for instance Rust 214-32; Dillon; and Richards 143-65.

action, speak its most consequential lines, and determine its outcome. All female characters exhibit strengths traditionally ascribed to men only. Intelligence, courage, and determination are their hallmarks, as is their conviction that they are in no way inferior to men: "[W]oman was never formed to be the abject slave of man. Nature made us equal with them and gave us the power to render ourselves superior" (60-61), Fetnah, the favorite of Muley Moloc, Dey of Algiers, the play's chief villain, declares in the first scene of the play.[13] Fetnah, who is distinguished above all by her boldness and "ready wit" (75), also serves as Rowson's champion of female courage: "[I]n the cause of love or friendship, a woman can face danger with as much spirit, and as little fear, as the bravest man" (80), she insists—a credo all women prove true in the course of the play.

In the play's epilogue, written and spoken by the author herself (Rowson also acted the part of Olivia in the original production of *Slaves in Algiers*), Rowson reiterates her call for female empowerment. Directly addressing the "ladies" in the audience, Rowson delivers the arguably most provocative and, with regards to the renegotiation of gender roles, consequential lines of the play: "Women were born for universal sway; / Men to adore, be silent, and obey" (94). While the intended tone of Rowson's epilogue is hard to fathom from a contemporary perspective—was Rowson just being playfully ironic or did she intend to leave the audience with a serious sociopolitical message?—there is some evidence concerning its effect on audiences. The critic Peter Porcupine [William Cobbett], for instance, commented at length on Rowson's bold insistence "upon the superiority of her sex" (23) in his critical essay on Rowson's writing, *Kick for a Bite*. While his review is first and foremost an open attack on "the whole tribe of female scribblers and politicians" (20), Porcupine also confesses to "strange misgivings hanging about [his] mind, that the whole moral as well as political world is going to experience a revolution" (24). The lingering "misgivings" provoked by Rowson's dramatic subversion of traditional gender hierarchies serve as evidence of the

13 The portrayal of women in *Slaves in Algiers* is particularly intriguing when compared to Rowson's characterization of the female heroines in her novels. As Rust notes, "[t]hose familiar with Rowson only from *Charlotte Temple* might be surprised by the humor and energy found among the playwright's female personae. Where Charlotte's signature gesture was collapse, women such as Rebecca, Olivia, Zoriana, and Fetnah respond to their captivity […] with outspoken defiance" (226). Faye E. Dudden, too, draws attention to the absence of the "passive, sentimental heroine" in *Slaves in Algiers*: "In Rowson's play, a woman captive becomes a virtual missionary of republicanism to the North Africans, and her teachings on liberty extend to matters of gender" (9).

strong reverberations of the ongoing renegotiation of gender roles and hierarchies through literature.

Though progressive, even radical, in many respects, *Slaves in Algiers* does not fully eschew traditional female virtues. Filial duty, for instance, is depicted as one of the primary markers of a decent young woman, and sympathy and compassion as qualities no woman should lack. In spite of their bold refusal to passively accept their confinement and objectification, the three young women in the play, Zoriana, Fetnah, and Olivia, leave no doubt that they are fully aware of their responsibilities as daughters: "I cannot but weep when I think what my poor father will suffer" (69), Zoriana, the Dey Muley Moloc's daughter, admits when scheming to free her father's favorite slave, Olivia; Olivia, meanwhile, is determined to sacrifice her life to save that of her father, Constant (67); and at the end of the play, Zoriana resolves to remain in Algiers rather than leave for the United States to console her father Ben Hassan, the comic villain of the play: "While my father was rich and had friends, I did not much think about my duty, but now he is poor and forsaken, I know it too well to leave him alone in his affliction" (93). The mature American captive Rebecca serves as the play's champion of sympathy, compassion, and moral uprightness, and represents its "mouthpiece for right thinking" (Rust 223). It is she who detains her fellow American captives at the end of the play from punishing the comedy's villains, pledging that, however evil, "no man should be a slave" (91).

What distinguishes Rowson's approach to traditional markers of female virtue from most of her fellow conduct authors' is her insistence that these qualities are expedient and worth preserving because they empower women. The strongest ties between her female characters are their bonds of friendship, which are nurtured more than anything else by the women's ability to feel compassion and act sympathetically. It is by forming female networks, as Jeffrey H. Richards points out (165), that Rowson's women eventually manage to overcome all obstacles placed in their way. What Rowson hence shows is that women could, in fact, profit from what was widely considered their innate "qualities of the heart," if they were employed to the ends of female camaraderie.

Miscellaneous Poems (1804)

> "Children, like tender osiers, take the bow, / And as they first are fashioned, always grow." / Thus spoke the bard; and 'tis a moral truth, / That precept and example, taught in youth, / Dwell on the mind till life's dull scene is past; / Clinging about us even to the last / And women, pray for folly don't upbraid them / Are just such things, as education made them. (Rowson, *Poems* 105)

Rowson's engagement with the Federal Street Theatre in Boston only lasted one season. In 1797, the theater closed and Rowson decided to retire from the stage. She turned, instead, to a profession which had once before guaranteed financial security to her and her family: teaching. Her move to redirect her professional aspirations could not have come at a more auspicious moment. Women's education, which had not been of great concern in the North American colonies up until the late eighteenth century, entered the limelight in revolutionary America and voices in favor of expanding educational opportunities for women multiplied. In "An Oration upon Female Education" (1791), for instance, schools for young women are advertised as key institutions in the rise of the American nation; only through thorough schooling, the anonymous author insists, could American girls acquire the skills expected from model American citizens. Advocates of female education vindicated their position in the education debate by focusing attention on the importance of "good" mothers in the early American Republic, laying the foundations of an ideology Linda K. Kerber described as republican motherhood.[14] "[S]ons and daughters of every age, are indebted to their mothers for the seeds of virtue and knowledge" (48), the anonymous author of "An Oration" postulates; in order to prepare American girls for their crucial role as nurturers of future generations of American citizens, their education needed to become a top priority in the Republic.[15]

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14 Republican motherhood describes an ideology which emerged at the end of the eighteenth century in the United States. It is based on the idealized notion of American mothers as "custodian[s] of civic morality" who "guaranteed the steady infusion of virtue into the Republic" (Kerber 11) and instilled in their (male) offspring a patriotic mindset and public spirit.

15 Rush expressed similar sentiments in his public address to the visitors of the Young Ladies' Academy in Philadelphia roughly seven years earlier (6), and Rowson, too, repeatedly called attention to what was then considered the most decisive reason to advance female education. In the preface of one of her textbooks, *Biblical Dialogues*, Row-

In the same year the Federal Street Theatre shut its gates, Rowson opened her own school, the Young Ladies' Academy in Boston. It proved a great success and was soon considered one of the most prestigious girls' schools in America—laurels which reflected on Rowson's reputation and rendered her a well-known and highly esteemed public figure in the early American Republic. Her return to the teaching profession brought with it new thematic preoccupations and priorities, many of which are mirrored in her literary contemplations on female conduct. Her poetry collection *Miscellaneous Poems* (1804) offers advice for young women which is clearly informed by Rowson's experience as a teacher and reflects her teaching philosophy and her views on women's abilities. Whereas some poems, most notably "Maria," which tells the story of the seduction and fall of an innocent young woman, are still very much in line with traditional conduct advice for girls on the level of content—that is, heed your parents' advice or else you will find yourself "[w]retched, forsaken, and undone" (73)—other poems paint a different, much more progressive picture of women.

In "Women as They Are," for instance, Rowson suggests that women are God's "last, best work, his master-piece" (115) and share all virtues and talents believed to be exclusively male. In the first eight stanzas of the poem, Rowson enumerates the most pervasive negative stereotypes ascribed to women such as sentimentality, simple-mindedness, and vanity; in the final and strongest stanza, however, all clichés are exposed as unjust prejudice: "Pardon me, sir, I'll speak, I'm not afraid; / I'll tell you what [women] are, what might be made" (114), the author boldly begins her call for a thorough rethinking of women's position in society. She then goes on to insist that were men to reject popular misconceptions regarding women's intellectual capacities and treat them, instead, as reasonable beings, they would find in women equal partners, or as Rowson puts it, "friends, your purest joys to share" (115). For Rowson, proper education of both sexes is the crux of the matter, for "women, pray for folly don't upbraid them, / Are just such things, as education made them" (105). In the poem's final lines, Rowson re-endorses traditional gender relations, arguing that women ought to serve as the guardians of men's comfort and

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son elaborates on her position in the education debate thus: "When I became engaged in the momentous business of instructing females of the rising generation, whose future conduct as wives and mothers was to stamp the moral and religous [sic] character, and ensure in a great measure the virtue and consequent happiness of another age, I could not but feel the great responsibility of the undertaking" (iv).

domestic bliss (155); her call for better educational opportunities for women and her adamant questioning of unfounded prejudice against women render the poem nonetheless a noteworthy contribution to the gender and conduct discourse of the early nineteenth century.

A Present for Young Ladies; Containing Poems, Dialogues, Addresses &c. &c. &c. (1811)

> [S]ince innumerable instances may be produced of female courage, fortitude, talent, and virtue of every discription [sic], why should not we start forward with generous ardour in the pursuit of what is praiseworthy, and substitute for the evanescent graces of beauty the durable attractions of a cultivated mind. (Rowson, *Present* 84)

As founder and head of the Young Ladies' Academy, Rowson had the autonomy to decide what and how her pupils ought to be taught. The curriculum she developed was exceptionally well-rounded for the time, covering "ornamental branches of education" ("An Oration" 51), such as literature, drawing, and music, but also science, math, geography, history, and drama. In the course of her teaching career, Rowson published several textbooks, including a spelling dictionary, *An Abridgement of Universal Geography* (1805), and *Exercises in History, Chronology, and Biography* (1822). They reflect her versatility as a teacher and writer, and stand as lasting records of her contributions to the first efforts to institutionalize female education in the American Republic. *A Present for Young Ladies* is not so much a textbook than a compendium of "bagatelles" Rowson used in her classroom. Written "for the amusement and information of very young minds" (n.pag.), it consists of easily accessible texts of different genres and styles, including poems, public addresses, and a universal history. Conduct advice is offered in various guises, most intriguingly, perhaps, in the shape of dialogues.

Rowson's dialogues, all in all six, were written for the recital of her pupils both in the classroom and at public exhibitions. They represent, as Lement notes, "some of the earliest examples of dramatized pedagogy" (9) and children's theater in America.[16] Drawing from the everyday experience of her stu-

16 A further example of dramatized pedagogy is Rowson's *Biblical Dialogues* (1822), a collection of short dialogues between the members of the fictional Alworth family aim-

dents, that is, of white, middle-class girls, the dialogues all operate according to the same basic structure: up to three "little misses" discuss topics such as parent-daughter relationships, marriage, education, and amusements, with always one or two girls respectively occupying the role of the idle and self-obsessed "bad pupil" and one representing its counterpart: the obedient, diligent, and modest model student. In the course of each dialogue, the "good pupil" points out her companions' moral flaws, calls attention to their errors, and reminds them of their duties, often by paraphrasing advice received from mature female friends or relations. In the second dialogue, for instance, Lucretia explains the dangers of idleness by quoting her aunt, who taught her that girls "who lead indolent lives, / Are indifferent daughters, and make wretched wives" (23). Each of the dialogues ends with the disobedient wrongdoers repenting their behavior and promising to rectify their mistakes. "Direct me, assist me, my sister, my friend, / To find out each error, correct and amend" (30), Maria implores her sister in the third dialogue, before vowing to henceforth strive to emulate the latter's model conduct.

With their focus on modesty, delicacy, and chastity—the three most cherished feminine virtues in traditional conduct literature, according to Newton ("Wise" 144)—Rowson's dialogues reaffirm fossilized conduct conventions for young girls. What distinguishes the dialogues from traditional conduct literature is Rowson's move to place her thoughts into the mouths of her pupils, using their voices to propagate her views and argue her case. In casting them as "conduct mentors," Rowson encouraged her female students to look to "their peers for guidance" (Lement 10) and, in doing so, demonstrated the merits of female friendship and camaraderie. By inspiring her pupils to slip into different personae, Rowson moreover allowed them to performatively explore different characters and roles, and to rehearse proper conduct in the sheltered environment of her classroom. The annual exhibitions held at Rowson's Young Ladies' Academy provided pupils with a unique opportunity to practice performing and speaking in front of actual audiences—an ambitious and bold exercise at a time when public speaking was considered an exclusive right of white men.

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ing to help children understand the bible. In the preface of *Biblical Dialogues*, Rowson explains her choice of genre, sharing her experience with using dialogues in the classroom: her pupils, she insists, read the recitals "with avidity" (v). Her observation suggests that reciting (and presumably performing) dramatic texts was an integral part of Rowson's lessons.

Whereas the dialogues in *A Present for Young Ladies* primarily promote traditional female conduct, Rowson's "Sketches of Female Biography," published in the same compendium, offer quite different kinds of conduct advice and female role models.[17] "The importance of women in every civilized society is generally acknowledged" (84), Rowson stipulates solemnly at the beginning of her biographical chapter on women of genius throughout history. Almost forty pages of the compendium are dedicated to the life stories of "exemplary women" (84): From powerful Russian empresses to acclaimed Italian actresses, from celebrated English writers to French intellectuals—Rowson's history of women's achievements introduces a wide range of female "celebrities" and constitutes a valuable record of "noteworthy women" up to 1811. While Rowson emphasizes that intellectual and political abilities never interfered with these women's domestic duties and feminine virtues, all of her accounts highlight that women of all ranks and stations are as "capable of the highest refinement, and most brilliant acquirements" (88) as men. Rowson's paramount aim in enumerating these women's attainments outside the "private sphere"[18] is to convince her female readers that it is both possible and laudable to seek knowledge and make oneself venerated. In the conclusion of "Sketches of Female Biography," Rowson maintains that it is her "full conviction, that what women have attained heretofore, women may attain again" (121)—a clear appeal to her young readers to exploit their full potential and strive to emulate the heroines of the past.

17 Rowson was convinced that biography was a particularly useful genre for the instruction of young female readers since it could simultaneously "inform the mind, improve the taste, and amend the heart" (*Present* 83-84).

18 The assumption that the life of men and women in the age of the American Revolution can be split into two clear-cut "spheres"—the male public and the female private sphere—is among the most persistent and misleading to date. In his essay "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century," Lawrence E. Klein challenges this binary opposition. According to Klein, the distinction between public and private is too crude to accurately reflect the many dimension of men and women's life at the time (101-02). "[B]inary oppositions are a frequent, important and powerful tool with which people, past and present, attempt to tidy up their mental and discursive worlds. [… However], the binary opposition does not adequately explain the complexities of […] human experience in practice" (98).

Conclusion

"[C]onduct literature by nature is conservative and slow to reflect new cultural ideas" (*Behave* 70), Newton postulates in her guide to American conduct books. It aims at upholding idealized notions of gender roles and conduct and in doing so guarantees the social and moral stability of society. This description, while certainly applicable to the conduct tradition in general terms, neglects one important aspect: the context in which conduct texts were produced. At the close of the eighteenth century, when the social order had yet to be restored and fractured social structures rebuilt, conduct literature had to assume different functions in order to remain relevant for the citizens of the still fragile American Republic. Rowson was among those who recognized and met the new demands of American readers; taking advantage of the spirit of change the Revolution had evoked, she offered new versions of conduct advice for women which highlighted the benefits of granting them a say in the goings-on of the new Republic. Her tentatively subversive yet never confrontational ideas on female conduct, her ardent advocacy of female abilities, and her call for equal education for boys and girls are themes that run through all of her publications, alternately taking shape in letters, poems, dialogues, and plays. Without openly contradicting longstanding gender ideals and thereby risking her reputation as an author, actor, and teacher, Rowson managed to contrive powerful female role models which illustrate what might not be gained by granting women the right to actively participate in the life of the young Republic. It is for this reason that her literary contributions to the American conduct tradition and ipso facto to the forging of new role models for women merit recognition.

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Porous Spheres in Time of War
The Fair Americans and the Questioning of Gender Roles within the Family

Pauline Pilote

The War of 1812, although the Treaty of Ghent maintained the pre-war borders, was considered by many Americans at the time as a definite turning point, signifying the end of all British presence on the American soil. Right at the end of the conflict, Samuel R. Brown thus published an account of the war that he entitled *An Authentic History of the Second War for Independence*. The choice of title aptly translates the views of many of his contemporaries, as Andrew Jackson's victory at the Battle of New Orleans led to a surge of patriotism throughout the country, although that last battle did not actually change the outcome of the treaty. In the following years, the war was commemorated over and over again, by historians and writers alike, from Samuel Woodworth's own "romance of the nineteenth century, founded on the events of the war" (the subtitle to his *Champions of Freedom* [1816]), to Richard Emmons's *The Fredoniad; Or, Independence Preserved, An Epic Poem on the Late War of 1812* (1830). Through novels, poems, and romances, the war made its way into the American literary sphere (see Eustace), and the involvement of young American soldiers in the battle—and in particular on the Canadian front—was celebrated time and again.

The burgeoning American stage, which thrived during the conflict by producing patriotic plays to enliven the spirit of the American citizens, soon took up the subject as well. However, this surge of popularity was quite a recent phenomenon for the American theater as stage performances had been facing strong public disfavor since the seventeenth century, until theatrical representations were eventually outlawed by the General Court in 1750 on the grounds that they "occasion[ed] great and unnecessary expense, and discourage[d] industry and frugality, but likewise tend[ed] generally to increase immorality,

impiety, and a contempt of religion" (Nathans 22). After the Revolution, the debate lived on as theater was considered a preferred activity of the British enemy (Richards, *Drama* 1) and Boston, New York, and Philadelphia stages remained subject to government sanctions until the very end of the eighteenth century (Caldwell 311-12). Yet, despite its shaky beginnings, theater rapidly grew to become a popular entertainment at the dawn of the nineteenth century, as most coastal cities started to replace the smaller pre-revolutionary theaters and to build new structures, where local professional or semi-professional troupes could perform (Richards, *Drama* 1-2). Yet, even then, most plays performed on these new stages were of British origin or inspiration. In the early decades of the 19th century, however, plays tended to become more patriotic in themes and settings, with an increasing number focusing on representations of the nation's history (Baym 188) and issues of national identity (Kritzer, "Comedies" 3). With the American victories in the War of 1812, the plays taking place around major events or personalities involved in the conflict multiplied, alongside plays reviving the War of Independence, from John Daly Burk's *Bunker Hill; or, the Death of General Warren* (1811) to the dramatization of Woodworth's poem about the Battle of Lake Erie, *Heroes of the Lake* (1813), to the pantomime *The Battle of York; or, the Death of General Pike* (1814), the years 1814-15 being the heyday of these overtly patriotic productions (about productions on the Boston stage in particular, see Gafford).

Within that particular context it comes as no surprise that Mary Carr, seeking to earn a living from her productions, should turn to such a popular subject for her first play, *The Fair Americans*, performed under the title *The Return from Camp* in Philadelphia at the Chestnut Street Theater, on January 6, 1815—shortly before the official end of the war on February 13 (Kritzer, "Comedies" 9). Little is known about Carr, later Clarke, except that she was born in Philadelphia in the early 1790s and later lived in New York, where she was married to a man who died in 1816, probably from wounds he got fighting in the War of 1812, and that she wrote to maintain herself and her children after his death (Branson 38-39). She thus became one of the first American women to support herself as a writer and the first to edit and publish a magazine for women, *The Intellectual Regale; Or, Lady's Tea Tray* (1814-15), alongside writing songs, poetry, biographies, and creating and reviewing plays (Kritzer, *Plays* 16). If *The Fair Americans* was the first play she wrote, mingling dramatic performance, musical interludes, and pageantry, she continued with *The Benevolent Lawyers; or Villainy Detected* (1823), a melodrama about a woman pursued by the lustful intentions of a villainous landlord while her husband is at sea,

and *Sarah Maria Cornell; or, the Fall River Murder* (1833), the dramatization of the then sensational murder of a young mill worker in Rhode Island, that had a long run at Richmond Hill Theatre in New York (Fisher 96; Kritzer, "Antebellum Plays" 122).

Contrary to the contemporary plays on the War of 1812, *The Fair Americans* shies away from the representation of major military figures (as Generals Warren and Pike for Burk and Woodworth respectively), and chooses rather to focus on a village, and in particular on two families, living on the shores of Lake Erie. Both families commit to the conflict, the sons going away to fight, while the women and fathers stay at home and wait for their return. With that, the setting and the layout of the plot recall the hackneyed storylines of other more famous romances set in time of war, such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Spy* (1821), which spans from the War of Independence to the War of 1812. Like *The Fair Americans*, Cooper's novel extols the young soldiers' bravery, the patriotic feelings of the women who let them go and anxiously stay behind, and the expected family reunion glorified in the celebration of both the victorious country and the wedding of the long separated lovers at the end of the story.

By choosing the stage rather than the book, Carr steps into a male preserve: contrary to the theater of the late eighteenth century, which "provided a receptive space to the feminine voice" by "welcom[ing] women into a public role" (Thoen 15-16), early nineteenth century theater became more exclusively masculine in terms of attendance, production, and themes, with a particular emphasis on manly virtues (Butsch 378-79). This gender bias lasted roughly until the heyday of sensational melodrama in the 1860s and 70s, which drew women back into the theaters (see Block). Thus, Carr, picking up a theme favored by her contemporary male novelists and playwrights, gives it a new turn in a play where the main focus is on the comedy of marriage rather than on the various stages of the armed conflict. Using the constraints of the theatrical space, she provides a new version of the hackneyed storyline of romances in times of war: unlike plays and romances where the main battles are described at great length, the war happens offstage in *The Fair Americans* and the stage is shared by both the soldiers in their camp and their families that remained in the village. Narrowing the focus on two families, the Harleys and the Fairfields, whose sons and daughters intermarry at the end of the play, Carr thus alternates between two different settings to picture the war without ever bringing the conflict onstage. By this shifting back and forth between two stage sets, the play reconsiders the usually never-overlapping

worlds of the men fighting on the front for the women waiting at home for their return. This essay will seek to show that this choice of rotating settings for her narration of the war enables Carr to use the male-dominated space of the early-nineteenth-century American theater to discuss women's place: *The Fair Americans* renegotiates the ideology of the separate spheres at the time of its consolidation in the public discourse by blurring the boundaries between these two spheres.

War and the Codes of Manhood and Womanhood

The play opens with an apparently clear notion of two well-defined separate spheres delineating dissociated gender roles, thereby denoting an ideology that emerged in the aftermath of the Revolution and thrived throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, as Linda K. Kerber shows, the Revolution shook old assumptions about bourgeois and upper-class women's place in civil society and enabled many women, both Loyalist and Patriot, to take on an active political role (Kerber 20). The end of the war asked for a re-evaluation of the place of women and in the context of a "historical and political gendering of the nation" (Samuels 14)—the ideology of the separate spheres emerged, separating the private from the public along gendered lines. Therefore, in the early nineteenth century, "issues of sexual asymmetry dominated public discourse to an unprecedented extent as people tried to define a place for women in postrevolutionary society" (Kerber 20), and it is in that context that Carr wrote *The Fair Americans*. In this articulation of these gendered spheres, the emphasis is put on separation: in the post-revolutionary years, the domestic sphere is reconsidered as thoroughly disconnected from the public world. This clear partition emerged as a particularly American phenomenon, as noticed in 1835 by Alexis de Tocqueville in his *Democracy in America*: "in no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways that are always different" (705). It is this context where "[the two] spheres may be mutually supportive but are nonetheless emphatically distinct" (Samuels 18) that shapes the background of Carr's play and that is illustrated in the division of the dramatis personae along gender lines in the introductory pages and the opening scenes of the play.

Although sharing the same theatrical space, two different settings alternate at first: Act I, Scene 1 takes place against the bucolic background of a farm

in a village on the shores of Lake Erie, while the stage direction indicates a "beautifully romantic" scenery (186). In this setting, Anna Harley and Sophia Fairfield are involved in light chatting about morning chores. However, they soon leave the stage as soldiers come in and start discussing the oncoming war and the necessity of recruiting troops.[1] Visually, thus, the stage at first suggests two spheres that do not overlap: the moment Sergeant Dash and his men enter the stage, the girls exit. In the first scenes of the play, the stage appears as a middle ground: Anna and Sophia leave on one side, while the soldiers leave on the other (188), as if to emphasize the two distinct spaces to which the audience is then introduced. In the following scenes, the story indeed alternates between the events happening on the farm and those happening at the military camp, the two settings being clearly differentiated through specific stage directions—"the village," or at times, the garden of the Fairfield's farm, on the one hand, and "the camp" on the other. The village itself is marked by everyday work and household activities, as enunciated by Mrs. Fairfield upon her very first appearance in the second scene: "cows to milk—breakfast to get—bread to bake—beer to brew—butter to churn—cheese to press, everything to do" (188). The farm seems to be the preserve of women, and Mrs. Fairfield goes on to call out for all the other girls in the house, namely her two daughters, Sophia and Maria, and the maid, Hetty. The farm therefore stands as a female space, in opposition to the camp. This gendered contrast is made obvious by servant Dermot, who is willing to enlist in the army precisely with the purpose of leaving the farm and its women: "Ah, may the devil's mother fly away with me if I wouldn't rather be shot ten times a day than live with an ould [sic] scolding devil as you are, so here goes to list [sic] [...] For dam'me [sic] if a camp can be worse than this house" (196). In these early scenes, the context of war seems to bring about a literal separation of the two spheres, with the domestic circle located in the Fairfield's farm, geographically distant from the masculine space of the camp.

And the play goes on to maintain the idea of men going to war to protect the country and their women guarding the home: "On your generosity, honor, and courage we depend for protection" (204) is the motto branded on the flag the women present the soldiers on the eve of battle. War, as presented by Carr, just as by Cooper or Woodworth, or many other writers of the times, seems to

1 The scene recalls at first sight the plot of George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), a play that was highly popular during the American Revolution and in the early nineteenth century (see Gardner).

be the context where the ideals of manhood and their undertones of chivalry can be re-enacted: "At beauty's shrine [the soldier]'s doomed to bow, / To honor true, you well do know," claims Anna's song in the first scene (187). Women appear as either ladies to be revered or damsels to be rescued: Sergeant Dash himself uses the words "rural damsels" (188) to describe Anna and Sophia, who indeed later become "distressed damsels" (212) at the end of the story, when they are kidnapped by Indians and have to be saved by their companions. Be it against the outside foe—the British—or menacing Native Americans, "it's a soldier's duty to protect the fair" (207), says one of the officers in the play. While men take on this chivalrous role, women assume the position of ladies pining for the return of their lovers and lamenting their absence, as Maria Fairfield grieving the departure of Charles Harley: "Poor Maria, its [sic] heart is fled, and now she pines like a wood robin in a cage. Can she not raise one sweet song to call the wanderer back?" (199). The clichéd image of the lady awaiting her lover's return corresponds to that of men battling to honor their ladies and looking for prizes to come back triumphant, as Ensign Freelove wishing for "laurel to lay at [Anna's] feet" (210).

The play therefore starts by casting those separate roles very neatly: if Anna and Sophia leave the stage in the first scene while mentioning "those whose duty it is to protect us" (187), Sergeant Dash's first words bring the expected answer: "Well, my gallant lads, this is glorious going to war" (187). And the play proceeds with this initial extolment of warfare, by presenting it as a means of gaining "honor and fame" (187), or a stamp for manliness, as in the case of Dermot who goes to fight because he wants to prove his manhood: "I must list [sic] to show her [Hetty] I am a man" (197).

In Carr's rendering of the conflict, war seems at first to distribute distinctly the roles of manhood and womanhood and therefore to recast men and women into separate roles and separate spheres, with men fighting for glory and to protect their country, their home and the women, all three seemingly coalescing into one single lot.

War on Stage and the Constant Blurring of Boundaries

With this, Carr's choice of a love plot pegged onto a martial background is in the same vein as that of her contemporary fellow-writers: for the Americans of the early nineteenth century, writing about the wars, be it the War of Independence or the War of 1812, is a way of extolling a mass of male heroes

that rose up to defend the country in the name of patriotism. Yet, the use of a single theatrical space to bring these two worlds before the audience leads to a constant criss-crossing and blurring of the boundary between the two. Despite the illusion of a clear-cut division in the opening of the play between two separate settings, the stage is actually constantly shared and each sphere repeatedly invaded by the other.

Some men stay at home, as is the case of Mr. Fairfield and his friend Harley, who are too old to fight. More tellingly, the play also features the former's son, Edward Fairfield, who refuses to go to war because his fiancée lives across the lake in Canada: "For me, my resolution is taken never to raise an arm against the country that contains my Matilda; therefore, I remain neutral" (197). As a result, these male characters recurrently appear against the background of the farm setting, which was initially introduced as a female preserve. Similarly, women stand on the male location of the camp, as specified in the stage direction starting Act II: "A camp. Soldiers pitching their tents, women cooking and preparing breakfast" (193), or even more obviously, Anna and her friends intruding into the camp in Act IV to present the flag. In these cases, the stage therefore allows the spheres to overlap visually.

But this overlapping reveals more than just a practical way for Carr to deal with the constraints of a unique stage for two separate spheres. The sharing of the theatrical space comes as visual evidence of a deeper revision of what was first presented as separate spheres: in fact, the visual imbrication is translated into the roles of the characters themselves. Time and again throughout the play, some characters go beyond the boundaries of their gendered roles and overstep the limits of the initially distinct domestic and public spheres, thereby suggesting the notion of porous rather than separate spheres. The scene of the military pageant in Act IV—when the girls come to give to the soldiers the standard they have woven—is at first sight seemingly replete with chivalrous undertones. Yet, in Carr's rewriting of this commonplace of chivalric romances (where the lady gives a cloth as a token for her knight to carry into battle), Anna is the one who brings the flag to the camp in a scene that plays with the references it summons:

> SOPHIA: […] But Anna, you must present [the flag]. You have more courage than any of the girls in the village, so the task devolves on you.
> ANNA: Well, so be it. I must dress a la mode de Amazon [sic]. Let me see… yes, yes, my green riding habit will be the very thing, with a green velvet hat and three white feathers. I really think I shall make a few conquests—nay,

> without doubt, half the generals, majors, colonels, and captains, in the army will bend to my all-conquering eye. (200)

The Amazon costume first refers to the female attire for side-saddle riding fashionable in the nineteenth century, which she describes in detail. Yet, the earlier portrait of Anna as the bravest girl in the village and her own explicit mention of conquests (while Sophia opts for the flatter image of her own "powers of attraction" [200]) bring to the fore an unequivocal echo of mythical female warriors. Anna compares herself to these warriors, even though the association was a dreaded one in the new republican definition of womanhood (see Shaffer). And indeed, the fact that she and her bevy of followers all wear the same colors and the same costume as they enter the stage for the presentation suggests the idea of a company in uniform. The association of Anna with the belligerent Amazon in the second half of the play asks for a reconsideration of Sergeant Dash's initially comic mistake in the very first scene, when he misidentifies Anna and Sophia as "men [who] attack in ambuscade" (188). The very descriptive stage direction of the pageant emphasizes the military dimension of the scene that extends to the arriving females: "enter[s] […] Anna, dressed in a green riding habit, velvet hat the same color, with three white feathers. Sophia, Maria, and three others, dressed like Anna. […] [T]hey *march* round the stage. The officers *salute* them" (204, my emphasis). By militarizing the women who fully belong in these martial surroundings, Carr here seems to be overturning the chivalrous commonplace: not only are women and soldiers here sharing the stage, but they are also put on an equal footing visually, in a group scene evoking two companies of soldiers in uniform.

And this revision of conventional gendered roles reverberates verbally in the lines of some other characters who also overstep the boundaries of their gendered spheres. Mrs. Fairfield, who was initially rambling about domestic chores, later envisages herself at Congress, thereby stepping directly into the public sphere—"I wish I was Congress; I would always be at peace!" (198). At the same time, Ensign Freelove, while boasting of his chivalrous manhood, is the one who stays behind and remains inside his tent, pining for home as the conflict is raging outside: "I was roaring, dying with the toothache! Had I have been well, I should have fought like a lion; but I thought I should have died with agony. My limbs shook with pain. This is the cold I caught some time ago" (210). The "cold" here refers to an earlier dialogue Freelove had with General Trueman, which shows Freelove's ineptitude for warfare: "dam'me if

my bones don't ache most cursedly. *(Yawns.)* I am afraid I have caught cold, for *I* never slept out of a feather bed before" (193, original emphasis). Although both Freelove and Mrs. Fairfield are the butt of the comedy and though their lines contribute to the jocular tone of the play, the porosity of the spheres they evince is taken up in other, more serious, characters. Unlike most plays on the war, where women are usually constrained to secondary roles, in *The Fair Americans*, they are given the first and concluding words (uttered by Sophia and Anna respectively). While verbal prominence is given to the female characters of the play, most of them also question their usual status. Such is the case of Maria who, though earlier seen yearning for her lover's return, also says: "What a dependent state is woman's. I wish I was a man" (199), only to later "unman" (200) her lover.

Verbally and visually the world of men and the world of women constantly overlap as characters freely move from one to the other. The theme of conquest that runs as a thread through the play seems to bind both into one. Initially belonging to the military, it applies in the play to both the conflict at stake *and* the underlying notion of courting that pervades the dramatic narrative, therefore uniting lexically the sentimental plot with the martial context. While General Trueman is initially discussing military conquests allowed by the war with Freelove, the latter moves from territorial possession to sexual possession: "a few months will make us masters of [British Canada]; for the inhabitants will, of course, flock to our standard by thousands, and we shall only have to take possession. I wonder if the girls in Canada are as handsome as in America" (193). This overlapping of military and sexual possessions later transfers to female characters, since Anna herself, dressing up for the pageant, states: "I shall make a few conquests—nay, without doubt, half the generals, majors, colonels, and captains in the army will bend to my all-conquering eye" (200). Contrary to Amelia Howe Kritzer's view that the war enacts the severance of the two spheres—"when most of the young men join the army, [...] the play's action divides into two separate spheres [...] [and a]t the end, when the war is won, the two spheres reunite" ("Comedies" 9-10)—, this reading sees the theme of war itself, chosen by Carr as the specific background of her story, as precisely the means of enabling their conjunction.

From the Comedy of Union to the Promise of Fusion

Warfare, although fostering a re-enactment of codes based on the separation of the two gendered spheres, also seems, in this play, to create the conditions for the overlapping of the domestic and the public spheres and the ensuing questioning of gender roles. From the title page, which brings together visually the words "comedy" and "war," to the plot, blending the sentimental with the sensational tropes of war fictions, the play represents an oxymoron, one that fuses together usually non-overlapping notions. Carr's comedy, on top of featuring the stock characters of the "fop" (Freelove), the "shrew" (Mrs. Fairfield), and the prototypical Irishman (Dermot), is also a comedy of marriage that ends with a triple wedding: Anna Harley and William Fairfield, Maria Fairfield and Charles Harley, and Sophia Fairfield and Captain Belford. The first two are part of the conventions of the genre and of the chosen theme of an American family at war, where the ending merges the expected reunion of the lovers with the restoration of national order. However, the third marriage—and the one that closes the play—comes more as a surprise and fully participates in the oxymoronic outlook of the play. Indeed, Captain Belford is an English officer, who is welcomed within the American family because he rescued Anna and Sophia from their captivity at the hands of Native Americans. So if *The Fair Americans* fully belongs to such comedies of union that flourished in the early nineteenth century, presenting victorious America through the trope of a unified family (see Samuels), it nonetheless incorporates in this particular case the British Belford and the neutral Edward: even though the issue of the latter's wedding is left up in the air and is not part of the triple celebration, Edward is last seen on a canoe bound to Canada with Belford's friend, Major Clifford. The incorporation of weddings across the national divide is unprecedented, in particular when compared with other romances on the subject. In the case of Cooper's *The Spy*, such a union is bound to fall apart, as the engagement between the American Sarah Wharton and the Loyalist Colonel Wellmere fails to come through and ends in the flames of their burning house on their wedding night (267). In *The Fair Americans*, however, the wedding does take place and the play therefore ends on this "uni[on of] contraries" (213), to rephrase Sophia's words when describing her marriage to Belford.

The play orchestrates this juxtaposition of opposites, not only in terms of nationalities and characters, but also in terms of themes, thus allowing for the

confrontation of discourses both in favor of and against the war. The Harleys wish for a rekindling of the "spirit of seventy-six" (191):

> The spirit of Washington, Warren, Montgomery,
> Looks down from on high, with aspect serene.
> We will give them a sign, and a tear to their memory.
> Oh, make us valiant as they all have been.
> See children, affrighted, cling close to their mothers,
> The youth grasp the sword and for battle prepare;
> While beauty weeps fathers, and lovers, and brothers,
> Who rush to display the American Star. (192)

If the Harleys—father, daughter, and son—are united in the war effort, the Fairfields as a family condemn such a war, thereby voicing the strong anti-war sentiment that surfaced in the first years of the conflict—before it was outweighed by a more patriotic support of the war in the final victories (see Winter). Sophia describes the war as "this unnatural contest" (195) and both Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield lament the state of a country at war. Recruiting troops takes the workforce away from the fields and leaves the country desolate and the women dejected, according to Fairfield, who rephrases a common argument of the anti-war press at the time: "The declaration of war was precipitated by the fatal impatience of the administration, operated upon by the haughty threats or seductive artifices of an undisguised enemy and oppressor; and a corresponding anticipation ensued in the plot planned against our lives and our property" (*Federal Republican* publisher Alexander Hanson, qtd. in Winter 1572). In the play, Fairfield says:

> War said you? Once more must our fields be deluged with the best blood in the country; once more must carnage stalk abroad in the form of hostile Indians, and our flourishing villages be laid in ruins—our smoking hamlets serve but to light their distressed inhabitants in their flight. Again "must mothers weep their husbands lost, their infants slain." Oh, my too prophetic heart! Long have I dreaded this resource, yet now it comes like a thunderstroke [sic]. (190)

At times, Carr shifts away from the usual paeans to war as a patriotic endeavor that can be found in contemporary texts dealing with such a theme. She allows discourses about the other side of the war to confront the still present extolment of warfare, without ever appearing disloyal, as in the case of Edward Fairfield, whose neutrality is neither ridiculed nor condemned.

Through the play, the notion of patriotism, brought to the forefront in the last lines of the play's prologue (185), is thus constantly questioned and eventually redefined. Although the staging enacts a dispute between different views on the conflict, the characters who challenge the very relevance of war do not, however, come across as unpatriotic. While the Harleys, both father and son, voice the common patriotic opinion on the War of 1812—"England has broke [sic] the treaty of amity and commerce made by our glorious Washington; the spirit of seventy-six is aroused, and no longer shall our Eagle crouch to their proud Lion" (191)—other reactions seep through, embodied in the play by the Fairfields: "adieu, the fertile fields, the rural ball, the soft sigh, the tender smile; and welcome, the tented field, the martial shield, and all the horrors of almost civil war" (195). Yet, Carr never presents this dissensus as a sharp dichotomy. Despite his reluctance, William Fairfield still acknowledges the nation's call to arms: "I cannot see the justice of invading Canada by way of reprisal for the depredations of England on our commerce. I think it would be better to protect the trade, than invade our friends; yet, as war is declared, why, it is the duty of every man to espouse his country's cause" (194). On the other hand, while Freelove boasts of his courage and patriotism when he seeks to arrest Captain Belford (213), his lack of spirit and his ineptitude belie his very words and cast ridicule on his pretentions. The ironic use of "patriotism" in his lines is even highlighted as it comes as a repetition of the term voiced in the previous scene by none other than Major Clifford, the British friend of Captain Belford (211). Patriotism appears in the play as a token of valor, closely associated with the notion of heroism (192, 199), and all the more so since the only other occurrence of the word is applied to Anna, whose "patriotic efforts" (200) are commended. The connotations of the term reach further than the usual trope of patriotic American soldiers in the war fictions of the times and include worthy enemies and heroic females. As Jeffrey H. Richards notes in his analysis of the play, "[t]hese [male] republican ideals infuse many of the female characters" ("Republican" 64), such as Anna, who is recurrently defined as "heroic" or "noble," on a level with her brave male counterparts.

As a key term in a play performed at a time of the celebration of American heroism and amidst a general surge of nationalism in the wake of Jackson's victory at the Battle of New Orleans, the notion of patriotism is eventually redefined by Carr. By extending its range, she blurs further the limits of gender and the nation, and therefore promotes, both in the actions and the lines of the play, an ideal of harmonious blending. More than a comedy of union, *The Fair Americans* is eventually one of fusion, where opposites merge and gen-

dered spheres overlap and eventually amalgamate. It is the context of warfare, in bringing two neighbors together, that creates the conditions for such blurring and merging. The change of title from the initial *Return from Camp* to *The Fair Americans* illustrates this indistinctiveness. If the original title clearly focused on the physical separation between the two circles through the image of men coming back home from an outside military front, the later title opts for undertones much less gendered. The choice of the word "fair" with its multiple meanings could apply equally to the fair, as in beautiful, ladies as to the honorable men (as the word, when applied to a person, retained into the nineteenth century its overtones of a noble, honorable, and reputable character). But the term also carries connotations of exemplary moral conduct (still in use in the nineteenth century although more archaic today), here to be applied collectively to both British and American characters. Indeed, although the title specifically focuses on the latter, the word "fair" tellingly reappears in the very last lines of the play, in a twice-repeated comment by Harley as Mrs. Fairfield hands her daughter to Belford: "[n]one but the brave deserve the fair" (215). Here, the indefinite address brings a notion of universality that goes beyond the nations at stake, and furthers the extended use of such terms as "patriotism" and "heroism" in the play.

The finale of the play fully participates in this promotion of an ideal of universality. The title-word "fair" recurs one last time when General Trueman adds a conclusive remark that closes the play before Anna's ode to peace: "And 'tis to the American fair the heroes of their country look for reward" (215), therefore eventually encompassing with the unspecified "country" all the new bridegrooms, both American and British. Even though the play opened with the announcement of war and the conscription of men, it closes with a more harmonious tone and does not end on the expected appraisal of the American battling spirit, but on a eulogy of peace and domestic bliss across countries and borders. By blending a sentimental comedy of marriage with a narrative of war, Carr's play eventually brings about a comedy of peace and union, where the action shifts from an initial conflict and oppositions between disagreeing families and neighbors at war to a general reconciliation. This overlapping and final fusion is visually brought on stage in the conclusion, the last act ending on a collective scene with all the actors present and reuniting on the shores of Lake Erie (212). The choice of such a neutral space, neither the camp nor the farm, set on the border between the two warring countries, heralds this plea for peaceful concord as an end note to the play.

Carr in *The Fair Americans* uses comedy and the tropes of sentimental accounts of war that were fashionable at the times in order to play with the conventions of the genre and the constraints of the theatrical space. Through the sharing of the stage by both soldiers at war and women at home, Carr gives another account of the War of 1812 and another narrative of union that goes beyond the expected happy ending with the wedding of the young American hero on his way back from victory. She takes further this notion of union and redefines it as a seamless overlapping of the two separate spheres that were being defined at the times through a separation of gender roles between domestic and public circles. Playing with this notion of opposite entities, the intermarriages and the final ode to peace call for an end to confrontation and highlight—beyond the notion of porosity and indeterminacy—the idea of union and thereby harmonious fusion.

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"O'er us, rovers free"
Performing Gender and National Identity in Jacksonian Pirate Melodrama

Alexandra Ganser

On both sides of the Atlantic, the early nineteenth century saw the staging and/or publication of numerous melodramas that dramatized and popularized pirate stories often already in circulation. Frequently based on the adventures and exploits of historical pirates and their subsequent fictionalizations, melodramas such as Lemuel Sawyer's *Blackbeard* (1824) and Joseph Stevens Jones's *Captain Kyd* (1830) transformed historical accounts into stage versions that tapped into traditional forms such as the captivity play, nautical drama, or comedy in order to create hybrid melodramatic versions of sensational pirate lore. In addition, melodramatic plays about pirates both in Britain and the U.S. familiarized a broader audience with historical romances such as Walter Scott's *The Pirate* (1822) and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Red Rover* (1827). They also dramatized the so-called "Barbary crisis" in the Mediterranean, with hundreds of U.S.-American citizens captured and enslaved off the coasts of Morocco, Algiers, and Tunis until freed by ransom; fundraising efforts effectively used melodrama for its emotional impact, which would lead to bigger donations. Many of these Atlantic pirate melodramas[1] are characterized by a concern with national identity that is brought to the stage as morally and ideologically framed entertainment.

My essay selectively examines pirate melodrama in the Jacksonian era from a gender studies perspective, focusing especially on antebellum theatrical negotiations of masculinity (and to some extent femininity). Doing so,

1 I use the term "pirate melodrama" for a form of melodrama that, besides carrying a reference to pirates in the title, draws on historical source material and pirate folklore and mixes in genre elements from diverse theatrical genres such as nautical melodrama, historical plays, and comedy.

it aims at presenting a little-explored, but highly popular subgenre of melodrama and asks in what ways constructions of gender as well as of piracy worked to consolidate notions of a U.S.-American identity on the popular stage, while at the same time putting normative constructions of nineteenth-century masculinity and femininity up for debate. Furthermore, I discuss the transatlantic exchange between British and American pirate plays with specific regard to questions of gender, genre, and nation. With this article, I hope to contribute to historical popular culture studies, which, also in the field of theater, takes seriously material that has been traditionally ignored; in preceding centuries mostly because of elitist bias and a lack of approaches that would have made these popular plays interesting for scholars; sometimes certainly also because of the lack of extant material. Before analyzing how two popular pirate melodramas—Sawyer's *Blackbeard* (1824) and Jones's *Captain Kyd* (1830)—perform and debate antebellum masculinity, the first part of this article contextualizes my analysis by briefly outlining the contemporaneous theatrical scene with regard to melodrama and its developments, and by situating the pirate as a popular figure on the melodramatic stage along with cultural constructions of Jacksonian masculinity.

Antebellum Melodrama and the Staging of Piracy

Many of the early-nineteenth-century popular plays that dramatized folk tales about historical pirates took the form of nautical melodrama, a melodramatic subgenre that emerged in a phase in which melodrama developed new forms and materials in the U.S. (Moody 237). This diversification was likely a result of more demanding audiences who could choose between an increasing number of theaters for entertainment, pleasure (on the stage and in the rowdy gallery), and moral as well as ideological orientation. This situation has led both contemporaneous and contemporary critics to speak of a "theatocracy" (D. Jones 60), in which popular taste largely determined what was seen on stage. James C. Burge summarizes the significance of melodrama in the early-nineteenth-century U.S. as follows:

> Melodrama's appeal […] was immense. The earliest ones […] featured the conflict between the vicious and venal aristocracy and the honesty, simplicity, and downright goodness of the common man […]. Melodrama also reaffirmed traditional moral beliefs, pointed toward rectitude in all things, and

> was invariably providential in seeing virtue ultimately triumph over evil. But its most appealing aspect, at least to its audiences, rested in its emphasis on action […] [M]elodrama offered thrills, suspense, excitement, and spectacle. (122)

Critics have lately complicated this purely affirmative assumption (see below), but generally agree that melodrama was not "a secondary cultural formation devoted purely to idle entertainment but was rather of primary importance in the shaping of United States culture" and in "the articulation of an exceptional national character," as "stage melodrama played a vital role in translating the dynamics of novels for popular consumption" (Mullen 49). Curiously and continually, however, this articulation was undercut by its transatlantic frame of reference (Herget 20).

Despite its popularity, there is little to no scholarship regarding not only piracy plays in particular, but also nautical melodrama in the U.S. in general, flourishing between 1820 and the Civil War (in contrast to pirates on the British stage; see Allen; Burwick and Powell; Davis). This lack of scholarship is certainly unjustified considering the sheer quantity of pirates on stage. The appendix presents a list of pirate plays I have collected from the first seven volumes of George C. Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* (1928-49), Arthur Herman Wilson's *History of the Philadelphia Theatre* (1935), and Reese D. James's *Old Drury of Philadelphia* (1932), the most important stage histories related to the centers of melodramatic theater in the period, as well as from occasional mention in secondary sources. As is the case with most popular plays of the era, the vast majority of the listed titles remains unpublished. This collection of titles from archival records for that period is necessarily incomplete; where known, I have added source texts in case of adaptations, U.S.-American premiere dates and venues, as well as information on publication.

In New York, melodrama in general and pirate melodrama in particular was mostly performed at the Bowery, which opened in 1826, but also at the Lafayette, the more respectable Park, Niblo's Garden, the Olympic, Chatham Garden, and The National; in Philadelphia (which was surpassed by New York as the leading theater city by the middle of the nineteenth century [Mordden 13]), the Chestnut Street Theatre and the competing Walnut Street Theatre, as well as the more working-class Arch Street Theatre, were the most important venues for the genre and its "passionate politics," as Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal aptly put it. In sum, theaters presented more than sixty pirate plays

(about ninety percent of which were melodramatic), and very probably many more, between 1820 and 1861.

By studying this list, one can also project what must have been a much larger number of nautical plays, as piracy plays were only a subset of this genre, as was nautical and piratical melodrama. Many nautical plays were also called national and military drama by contemporaries, for they often presented accounts of naval battles during the War of Independence or the Barbary Wars, celebrating the U.S. Navy's foundation and successes. The pirate plays, however, are rarely grouped with these—though, as I am arguing, they should be: they, too, functioned to consolidate notions of a specific U.S.-American national identity in general and an ideal American masculinity in particular on stage.

They did so, however, in a decidedly transatlantic manner: As the table also shows, many of the plays performed were written by British authors or relied on sources from British literature such as Lord Byron's *Corsair*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, or Walter Scott's *The Pirate*. In the case of Fitzball's *Red Rover*, an American source (James Fenimore Cooper's nautical romance) was adapted for the London theater and returned to U.S. stages in this and various other versions, though they curiously never were as popular in the U.S. as they were in Britain (Meserve, *Heralds* 227; Gordan).[2] In addition, many actors and actresses on America's stage were native Britons. Theatrical relations across the Atlantic in the 1830s and '40s can be characterized as quite paradoxical according to Walter J. Meserve, as they simultaneously propelled and halted the development of American drama:

> Following the lead of their literary and theatre colleagues across the Atlantic […], Americans provided entertainment that occasionally in Jacksonian America […] surpassed the melodrama of […] Europe in excitement and splendor. At the same time they made contemporary society in the new nation more aware of the need for an American dramatic literature. […] [T]he English came to America to act, write and return to England or to remain to promote dramatical art in their adopted country. […] [T]hey brought English plays and appealed to the aristocratic levels of American society. For the

2 Cooper's nautical romances were a favorite for successful stage adaptations. *The Water-Witch*, for instance, saw eighteen consecutive nights out of 37 in the 1829-30 season at the Bowery (Burge 165).

> common man […], however, they offered little. […] [T]hey controlled the theatres, drove American actors out of the large cities and essentially discouraged American playwriting. […] The English clearly helped establish theatre in America; at the same time, they clearly delayed the development of a distinctive national literature. (227)

Many of these stagings made use of recently developed water spectacles, which relied on technical innovations such as water tanks, pumps, and fountains in the theaters: "Large sections of the floor could be raised or lowered at will, and sometimes [were] replaced with tanks of real water into which smaller tanks installed above the stage poured convincing cascades. […] Full-scale ships with all hands on deck rise from the ocean bed […] and go down in flames in [Edward Fitzball's] *The Red Rover*" (Smith 27-28). Indeed, the development of both stage technology and the genre of nautical melodrama went hand in hand. Spectacular battle scenes and storms at sea were often also at the center of the affective economy of melodrama, bundling built-up emotions into excitement and relief, and were thus particularly arresting for audiences; in some pirate plays, the same function was fulfilled by elongated scenes of abduction, usually of female captives, and of characters dying on stage for minutes, both of which often ended in tableaux in order to give the audience time to process both emotional and ideological contents.

In the United States, the development of nautical melodrama largely coincided with the nationalist phase in American literature that had flourished since the War of 1812 against Great Britain and focussed thematically on the praise of democratic life and the celebration of military action (Moody 28). Thrilling and spectacular sea battles became a cornerstone of the melodrama of naval triumph, centering on male republican heroes. Pirate melodrama, while not always featuring nautical spectacle, also emphasized sea battles, but in addition asked critical questions regarding the legitimacy of economic and political power, drawn out in dialogue and romantic plots which simultaneously negotiated gender roles, especially with regard to American masculinity. The young Republic's first theater historian, playwright William Dunlap, connected the idea of a specific national theater with the hope of it becoming more "manly" in 1821: "Inasmuch as we may hereafter deviate from the models left us by our ancestors, it will only be, as we hope, in a more severe and manly character, induced by our republican institutions […]" (qtd. in Downer 2).

During the heyday of theatrical Romanticism between 1820 and 1850—largely coinciding with the Jacksonian era—, the affirmation of

faith regarding a democratic fight against socio-political tyranny and its glorification, cast in such terms of heroic masculinity, concurred with the establishment of theaters (such as Chatham Garden and the Bowery in New York) accessible to masses craving for spectacle, sensational action, and the romance of the distant and the remote (Moody 236). Thus, Mark Mullen has called theater the "mass medi[um] of the antebellum period" (36) with the larger theaters housing 2,000 to 3,000 spectators. Discussing race, gender, and class constructions during this period, Mullen asserts that

> we need to acknowledge that most people encountered the representational building blocks of these categories through theatre, not through novels or other kinds of print literature, […] [though] novels and theatre scratched on another's backs in an arrangement of reciprocal publicity that ensured the popularity of both. (37)

During the age of Jackson, a "flurry" (Meserve, *Heralds* 3) of playwriting in the U.S. both reflected and co-constructed the age's nativist attitudes while it also inquired into fledgling ideas of American masculinity that drew on Jacksonian values such as (WASP) freedom, anti-intellectualism, and the common sense of common men (Meserve, *Heralds* 5).

Piracy was one theme that lent itself to the requirements of melodrama as a genre and to the construction of a self-conscious "dream world inhabited by dream people and dream justice" (Booth 14) in the context of the Jacksonian era. Emotionalizing and moralizing prevalent ideas about gender, pirate melodrama represents one of the genres in which normative U.S. masculinity took center stage from the 1820s to the 1850s. Piracy as a subject drew attention to the legalistic and economic dimensions of such gender constructs, as it more often than not dramatized the emergent myth of the self-made man (see Kimmel 20-33), and thus epitomized an age in which the hero's "spectacular accomplishments onstage reinforced the believers in self-reliance [and] provided the 'self-made man' with a model […]; in melodrama the protagonist's heroism and frequent patriotic enthusiasm underlined the nationalism of the day" (Meserve, *Heralds* 7).

In what follows, I examine Sawyer's *Blackbeard* (1824) and Jones's *Captain Kyd* (1830), two highly popular pirate melodramas of the Jacksonian era, and explore in what ways gender constructions, particularly theatrical constructions of masculinity, and the evocation of piracy on stage worked together to negotiate essentialist Jacksonian notions of U.S. national identity and a model of democracy based on nativism, violence, and hyper-masculinity (see Kim-

mel 33). Though I cannot but present brief readings, I hope to elucidate how the popular stage of melodrama and the popular figure of the pirate presented an opportunity to non-elite audiences to participate in the socio-cultural negotiation of hegemonic idea(l)s of American manhood.

Blackbeard on Stage: "How to Make Proper Use of Wealth"

In England, the notorious pirate captain Blackbeard appeared on stage as early as 1798. James Cartwright Cross's *Blackbeard; or the Captive Princess* (Royal Circus, April 1798, repeated for upward of 100 nights; Seitz 129) as well as a later version, *Black Beard: or, the Desperate Pirate and Captive Princess* (1820), display Orientalist conventions similar to the Barbary captivity plays of the time[3] and celebrated British naval triumph over villainous pirates, whose notoriety and folk heroism was in turn cemented by their spectacular and serial reappearance onstage. This was evident also in the period's material culture, such as in the cardboard toy theater set "Pollock's Characters and Scenes in *Blackbeard the Pirate, or, the Jolly Buccaneer*" (1851, which was based on another stage version) (Fig. 3). Enabling children to enact pirate plays at home with the help of a cardboard stage and players, the set demonstrates how pirate stories were transformed transmedially into children's games in the course of the century. Interestingly, all of these articulations of the Blackbeard story transfer Blackbeard's piracies from the Atlantic American seaboard to the Indian Ocean and mix his character with that of other pirates and corsairs.

Most U.S.-American versions (the earliest apparently appearing in Boston in 1811 as "The Nautical Spectacle, Blackbeard, the Pirate"; Seitz 129) relocate Blackbeard to the original sites of his plunders. Edward Teach, Blackbeard's

3 Barbary captivity plays dramatized the first international crisis the United States faced at the dawn of the nineteenth century, when hundreds of Americans were captured off the coasts of Morocco, Algiers, and Tunis by corsairs and were mostly driven into slavery until freed by American ransom money—dramatizations that again harked back to their earlier British counterparts about British tars captured during Britain's Barbary Wars. Apart from Susanna Haswell Rowson's famous *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), most of these dramatizations came to the fore in the 1820s. These include Jonathan S. Smith's 1823 *The Siege of Algiers; or, the Downfall of Hadgi-Ali-Bashaw, A Political, Historical, and Sentimental Tragi-Comedy*, or Mordecai M. Noah's 1820 *The Siege of Tripoli* (New York, Park Theatre, 1820; see Fisher 403). Pirate melodrama that borrowed from these captivity plays also adopted their Orientalist conventions.

Figure 3. "Pollock's Characters and Scenes in Blackbeard the Pirate, or, the Jolly Buccaneer" (cardboard toy theater set, 1851).

historical name, turned pirate in the Bahamas, pillaged trading vessels off the Atlantic American coasts, and blockaded Charleston in 1718, but was a well-respected member of the colony at Bath, South Carolina. Attacked by the governor of Virginia, who did not like the pirate colony to the south, he died in battle near Ocracoke. The play's various stagings and relocations constitute a frame of national re-appropriation that, in the stage version by the Southerner Lemuel Sawyer (1777-1852),[4] is further supported by a temporal

4 Sawyer was a lawyer who served in the North Carolina assembly and as a member of the U.S. Congress (Meserve, *Entertainment* 267). In his *Auto-Biography* (1844), he discusses how the play was financed: "I vamped up a manuscript comedy that I had laying by me, called Blackbeard, and paid a visit to my wife in Washington in May, 1824. I concluded to publish a small edition of the comedy by subscription, and for that purpose consulted with Mr. Clay, the Speaker of the House. He encouraged me to take that step, and promised to head the list, and give it a motion through the House. I accordingly handed it to him to which he put his name, and by the aid of the boys who attended on the members in the hall the list circulated freely, and the second day after came out of the House with seventy names attached to it, which just paid the cost of publication; so that I had a clear gain in the sale of about four hundred copies, at thirty seven and a half cents each. It does not become me to boast of any merit or praise which rewarded

framework which displaces the legendary figure of Blackbeard from its original historical setting to the 1820s, and thus amidst contemporaneous discussions of class and socio-political issues such as the pitfalls of a democratic voting system, alcoholism, and a distinctly U.S.-American outlaw masculinity. *Blackbeard. A Comedy, in Four Acts: Founded on Fact* (1824; staged for example at New York's Bowery Theater in 1833), despite being marked as a comedy, can be read as a melodrama for its emotional appeal and sentimental plot. The play is replete with topical issues of the 1820s: temperance, social mobility, freedom versus slavery, anti-intellectualism and the costs of illiteracy, as well as enlightenment political ideas; at the same time, it responds to the craving of American melodrama audiences for exotic romances (Mordden 10-11). First and foremost, however, the play explores the economic dimension of American masculinity and of antebellum gender relations.

Blackbeard presents two entrepreneurial con men who trick their South Carolina peers into depositing money, which the ghost of Blackbeard, with the help of the devil, is supposed to reward a hundredfold. Rogers and his Irish-American accomplice Casey establish what in the *dramatis personae* is humorously called "the Blackbeard Company;" Casey appears as the pirate of yore, clad as a ghost, to proclaim Rogers his legitimate heir and to set up the financial scheme, which is (of course) a fraud. The audience witnesses how the villagers Frost, Muley, Roughy, and Turpis lose their money in a ritual with Blackbeard's ghost. A subplot concerns the intellectual Candid, who has lost community elections to Turpis because the latter has bribed his male electorate and, notably, also their wives with whiskey;[5] he is convinced that "[t]he bottle's the best electioneerer after all" (5), and one of the countrymen states: "I'm not drunk enough to vote yet" (11).[6] Candid's name is an ironic choice,

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me in addition to the profit of the work. But I received enough of both to satisfy me—in fact, more than I deserved" (27).

5 Meserve calls the plot confusing and scattered; he summarizes that Sawyer "satirizes the skulduggery of political elections, the manner in which wealth attracts women, the folly of people who believe in tall tales, and the usury rates in North Carolina" (*Entertainment* 268).

6 The paternalistic thematization of alcoholism was a common theme on the stage at a time in which the temperance movement petitioned for stricter drinking laws; see Frick; Hughes; D. Jones. The connection of drinking and voting is also a recurrent theme in early American literature concerned with the democratic process and the class-based fear of the popular vote; see for example Hugh Henry Brackenridge's picaresque novel *Modern Chivalry*, or Robert Munford's play *The Candidates*. Thanks to Leopold Lip-

as he is far too shy to propose to his love interest, Juliet Pembroke; he sends a letter instead, but receiving no answer, is ready to commit suicide, from which she saves him just in time.

What becomes immediately evident in terms of the construction of gender and national identity is that, compared to its British counterparts, Sawyer's play is de-eroticized; in Cross's version, Orra, Blackbeard's wife, Nancy, an escaped slave, and Ismene, the Persian princess who Blackbeard holds captive for ransom (Burwick and Powell 40) add much sexual tension, harking back to accounts of Blackbeard in the *General History*, in which he has fourteen wives. The Molièrian figure of Candid, in Sawyer's version, partly recalls a different version of Blackbeard, based on a popular ballad of the 1720s called "The Downfall of Piracy," which was supposedly written by a thirteen-year-old Benjamin Franklin: it took up British and American newspaper reports and describes Blackbeard as being afraid of women, thereby questioning his heterosexual prowess and manliness. This jokingly countered earlier representations of pirates as hypermasculine (see Karremann). Sawyer's U.S.-American version integrates the romantic subplot with more serious, if also at times comic, discussions of class and gender. The play revolves around "m[e]n of fortune" (30, 39), some of them of Irish descent (stock characters for a largely Irish-American Bowery audience), who take their chances to become rich and escape poverty as well as "the trouble of long and vulgar labour" (5). The phrase, in the slightly different version of "gentlemen of fortune," was often used to refer to pirates in early modern accounts of piracy—here, we deal with a version of the modern pirate as a financial trickster, anticipating Peter T. Leeson's quip that contemporary piracy mostly takes place at the stock exchange. Blackbeard's self-proclaimed heir indeed counts out shares and dividends at length for make-believe effect, in which he succeeds.

Juliet is advised by her mother not to follow her heart and respond to Candid's love letter: "by waiting a little you may meet with a better offer […] by better, I mean richer" (as Candid is rather poor); "besides, a little apparent neglect, so far from cooling his flame, will only add fuel to it; for an *object* always appears the more valuable, in proportion to the difficulties which oppose the *possession* of *it*" (17-18, my emphasis). The mother, while on the one hand affirming (young) women's object status as "possession," presents female agency in terms of the strategic use of these normative ideas for women's

pert for this notification, and both editors of this volume for their comments and suggestions upon preparing this essay.

economic advantage, indicating, perhaps, a counter-model of a "self-made woman"—even though the female "self" in this construction must stay within heteronormative marriage plots and thus does not exist without men. Juliet's guardian Frost also opposes the union for financial reasons: "It is against my interest for her to marry yet: my commissions on her estate are some hundreds annually, besides the means of speculation her money affords. Too much for me to lose yet" (20). In contrast, Juliet, a wealthy heiress, does not deem Candid's poverty a problem, proclaiming in a melodramatic mode: "If he is poor, I have enough for him and me too" (20). Still, she follows her mother's advice of "cooling his flame," which almost kills her beloved. The fortunes of love and money are intertwined by the materialistic bent of U.S. society, made visible by the use of economic terminology and discourse throughout the play, from Blackbeard being cited, comically, as an "invisible hand" (22), evoking Adam Smith's theory of the regulating force of the market, to discussions of inflation and corrupt state agents.

The melodramatic mode, which in the play is manifest mostly in the ultimately triumphant romance plot, of course favors "true emotion"—if in conflict with material gain—which is embodied by Juliet and, a bit less so, by Candid. Candid despairs in view of a world "for ambitious, artful and profligate minions of fortune to domineer in. Men who can sacrifice every principle to their own selfishness, best succeed" (43), while *his* only success in accumulation consists of a "load of anguish, provocation, misery, unrequited love and undeserved indignity" (43). Only the two female figures—Juliet and Muley's wife—portray what could be called, oxymoronically, *reasonable feeling*. While the men of Blackbeard's Company believe in Rogers's scheme, Muley's wife claims that only "feeling is the naked truth: when I can handle, and hear [the coins] rattle, then I shall be more certain" (27)—the physical, tactile experience of wealth trumps speculation, for she turns out to be right. Juliet saves Candid's life by returning his love: "I am alive," he sighs with relief, "I am restored to manhood; I feel the heart's warm emotion and best blood returning in a flood" (64). In line with its transgression of a gendered reason vs. emotion dualism, the play ends with Candid's announcement of a new philanthropic society based on the "generosity of sentiment" (63) and the call to take office as a Congressman, vowing to promote Greek independence and "unity with South America" (63).[7]

7 Pagination is erroneous after page 59, returning again to 56; I have used the original page numbers for documentation.

All in all, even this brief glimpse at Sawyer's adaptation of the Blackbeard story reveals how famous pirates are conjured to ask about the historical involvement in and profit from piracy, especially regarding the New England colonies. The American Republic constitutes only a potential step forward in the human history of freedom in the play: potential because this freedom is threatened by greed. Candid repeats enlightenment formulas of freedom such as "[m]an is a free agent, and to deny him the power of disposing of himself as he pleases under any circumstances, would be subjecting him to so despicable a slavery, that better were he never born" (63). He gives elongated speeches about the nature of freedom and the role of what we would term today the public intellectual, and he thus comments on the main plot philosophically, questioning a dominant masculinity that is defined by economic success more than anything else (though women like Skinflint's wife also appear as economic agents: she "was saving to buy some negro women" [35] before her husband loses their money). Let me close with a quote from his speech about the pursuit of happiness in Act III:

> [The world's] apathy and indifference to the *heroic exertions* of human nature to *rise from the degradation of slavery* to the rank and attributes which *ennoble our race* and *approximate us to God*, inspire me with the worst possible opinion of a large majority of the present race […]. [W]hen I was made, *the Almighty*, by his fiat, *bade me seek my happiness*. Happiness was the condition which was annexed to the tenure of my life. (43-44, my emphasis)

Candid is drawn to develop and perform a version of masculinity here which presents an interesting mix of Puritan, revolutionary, and Jacksonian ideas: hard work ("exertions"), racial superiority (white America has heroically risen from colonial "slavery"), and American exceptionalism—not as a blessing bestowed by God but harking back to the Puritan sense of the errand into the wilderness as an ambiguous duty. Thus, a philosophical-political basis of masculine identity, distilled from three defining periods of American nation-building, seems to be set against the greedy materialism of a piratical type of American manliness. If we read Candid as a less normatively gendered version of Blackbeard, suggested also by the black costume he wears in the final scene, the melodrama lightly suggests a fusion of the two in which wealth, reason, and emotion are no longer at odds with each other.

Captain Kyd; or, the Wizard of the Sea

Jones's 1830 melodramatic stage version of the story of Captain Kidd, which follows Washington Irving's folk account of "Kidd the Pirate" from *Tales of a Traveller* (1824), was produced at Boston's National Theatre to great success, and periodically revived there as well as in New York at the Park Theater (after the rival Bowery's manager T.S. Hamblin took over the management in 1848; see Burge 158) and Purdy's National Theatre until 1856. Jones's play was so successful it was rewritten by Joseph Holt Ingraham as a popular novel nine years later (Burwick and Powell 150), the novel in turn being followed by stage adaptations of its own (for example by Louisa Medina). One of Jones's most popular works, the play took up a folktale at a moment when nativism and nationalism were on the rise and "a tidal wave of patriotism had engulfed America" (Burwick and Powell 150) at the dawn of the Jacksonian age; middle- and working-class audiences looked for "that which was inherently native grown" (Burwick and Powell 162)—a common focus of American playwrights at the time to attract larger audiences (McConachie and Friedman 12).

Jones, a Boston dramatist, actor, and theater manager of The National Theatre, who also worked as a house playwright for the Bowery (Bank, "Bowery" 117), was one of the most prolific dramatists of his day, authoring an estimated 60 to 150 plays until 1843, when he started practicing medicine (Bordman 387; Meserve, *Heralds* 95), among them also the Barbary captivity piece *The Usurper: or, Americans in Tripoli* (c1835; see Fisher 245). Hamblin hired him away from Boston, where he had been successful among working-class audiences (McConachie 25). His extremely popular work is characterized by patriotic enthusiasm and spectacular melodrama, for instance *Moll Pitcher; or, the Pirate Priest* (1843), which presented Moll Pitcher as a feminist avenger who triumphs over a piratical priest (declaring that "[m]an is a betrayer; I live to protect woman," qtd. in Meserve, *Heralds* 101; she was apparently scorned by the critics).[8] Jones drew on folk figures such as Kidd and Pitcher, participating in the stage creation of what Henry Steele Commager called "a usable past" foundational for the construction of U.S. national identity. According to Frederick Burwick and Manushag N. Powell, Jones "represented Kidd as far more

8 Meserve cites the *Daily Mirror*'s scathing review (*Heralds* 100). The play revolves around Maladine, priest and arch-villain, on whom Moll swears vengeance for having seduced her, with virtue naturally thwarting his villainy.

shrewd and cunning than biographical accounts indicate" (50). The play features seven songs written by one J. Friedman, among them a popular ballad reaching back to the turn of the eighteenth century. He reframes Kidd's figure to discuss social upward and downward mobility via "Kyd" and his counterpart, the peasant son Mark, who eventually becomes Captain Fitzroy of the British Navy.

Captain William Kidd was a notorious pirate and occasionally licensed privateer in the 1690s. Of Scottish birth, he roamed the Caribbean and Indian Oceans and settled in New York, where he married a wealthy widow and became—like Blackbeard—a well-established member of society, collaborating with governor Richard Coote, Earl of Bellomont, in a scheme to attack pirate ships but keep their bounty for themselves rather than handing it over. This led him as far as the Red Sea, where he plundered pilgrims returning from Mecca as well as traders—actions that eventually threatened the East India Company so much that he—rather than Bellomont—was sentenced, in a biased trial, to be hanged at Wapping in 1701 (Rogozinski 179-80). The Ballad "Captain Kidd's Farewell," issued on the day of his execution and claiming to cite his confession at the gallows, is included in parts and with alterations both in Jones's (where it is called "My Name Is Captain Kidd") and other stage versions.[9]

Jones's melodrama starts in England, with an archery contest among young royalty around Robert of Lester, initially played by the famous actor Junius Brutus Booth (father of Edwin and John Wilkes). Robert shows cowardice and jealousy and is rebuked by Mark Meredith, a poor fisherman's son, and by his love interest, Kate Bellomont. When Elpsy the Witch reveals Lester's true origins as the illegitimate son of the Danish buccaneer Hurtel (sometimes spelled Hurtil) of the Red Hand and herself, and it becomes clear that the real Lord of Lester is Mark, Robert feels betrayed, experiences a crisis of identity, and joins a group of pirates. He reinvents himself as "Captain Kyd, King of the Sea" and sails for America, while Mark becomes Captain Fitzroy of the Navy. In Act II, set in New York five years later, we enter a tavern filled with drunken Dutchmen, one of them, Horsebean Hemlock, telling yarns about Kyd's villainies. Both Elpsy, now "the Witch of Hell Gate" (the outlet where ships crossed into the harbor of New York), and Kate have also moved to New York, and Kyd tries in vain to persuade Kate to marry

9 The ballad's lyrics became harsher over time, representing Kidd increasingly as monstrous and Satanic, "curs[ing] God and his own family" (Rogozinski 56).

him. He seeks out Elpsy in the "[e]xtravagant scenic spectacle" (McConachie 31) of the Witch's Hut for a love charm—an exemplary scene in which stage directions are, as so often in a genre geared towards affective and associative effect, more important than dialogue:

> Interior of the Witch's Hut, composed of rocks, trees, old boots, &c., […] an invisible transparency of the pirates boarding the Ger Falcon. […] Another transparency of a pirate hanging on a gibbet, both to be lighted up at the end of the act. […] A skull with a thigh bone fastened to it for a ladle. Skeletons and skulls around the stage. Cotton batting, wet with fluid, to light for incantation. The trap to be masked in with a crocodile; a serpent to twist around Elpsy's waist; another for her head, and two others for her arms. (25)

After a wild storm, the act ends with the two illuminated transparencies, showing the sinking pirate ship and the pirate swinging from the gibbet. Kyd scuds through the storm, winning a battle against Mark's ship but losing his own, and returns with a treasure to bury at Hell's Gate. Fitzroy captures him, but Kate saves his life for the sake of their common past, at least temporarily.

Captain Kyd, like *Blackbeard*, triangulates gender, national identity, and class, thematizing the subjection of the lower by the upper classes by using the genre of the historical play in melodramatic rendition. Act I, set in England in 1694, shows a clear separation between aristocracy and peasantry, while the moment the play is transferred to New York, class relations become confusing and less clear-cut. The noble-born heroine eventually unites with Mark/Fitzroy, who is described as a self-made man (despite turning out to be a nobleman by birth eventually); when he goes to sea to cross the Atlantic towards America, he exclaims:

> This day shall end my servitude to poverty! Have I not a soul, a mind? May I not, in spite of nature, yet become the builder of my own name? I dare to love, and love high […] I will win a name that shall hide the one I wear […] I will work out for myself bright fortunes, or I will not live on the earth where I must be inferior to my fellow-men. (11-12)

Robert/Kyd serves as a contrasting foil in this respect; he, too, swears to reinvent himself as "the Sea King" (16) and a feared pirate, though his motivation is revenge rather than rebellion against constraints of class. The revenge motif is central to what Bruce McConachie calls "apocalyptic melodrama" (17) of the antebellum period, ending in eventual destruction; here, "[m]ale deeds are paramount: persecuting heroines, unveiling virtue, and striking back to

avenge a history of wrongs" (29). In *Captain Kyd*, villain and avenger, nobility and gentility are exchanged in the cradle; a dominant thread of the action revolves around untangling their descent, leaving the audience in doubt as to the moral character of the avenger for quite some time.

Captain Kyd is even more spectacular than *Blackbeard*, excessively filled with wild battle scenes and artificial special effects like wind, rain, thunder, and lightning (27), starkly recalling Peter Brooks's definition of melodrama as a mode of excess. Again, a specific American concept of masculinity—the pursuit of happiness through self-determination—is at the center of the play, thematized through the contrast between legal and illegal socio-economic ascent. The melodrama's morale and ideology instruct its audience to endorse the former and oppose the latter, though Kyd is the more spectacular figure due to costume (he is clad in crimson and often holds a black flag with skull and crossbones; see the description of costumes, 3) and his preceding legendary status (see the title), evoking Winfried Herget's argument that the centrality of the villain as a figure of identification introduces much more moral ambivalence to melodrama than is usually assumed (20-21). The representation of femininity, in contrast, remains unchanged by the transatlantic journey, but is much less conventional than *Blackbeard*'s from the start: women are introduced as skillful hunters—the audience's first encounter with an outspoken and courageous Kate (in addition to ten other "archeresses" [4] in Amazon-like garb) takes place when she kills a hawk in the archery contest (5-6)—and as a powerful, fearful witch. There are references to women's cross-dressing (e.g. 30), one of the most popular forms of gender play that frequently occurred in nautical and pirate melodrama, and the play even allows for homosocial desire onstage when Edwin, one of Fitzroy's crew, swears he would give his life to protect his beloved master: "Heaven preserve him through all dangers! I will not leave his side; the blow that reaches his heart must first pierce mine. Rupert, do I not love thee?" (31).

Confused and mistaken identities, propelling the play's plot, are indicative of the negotiation of heritage and legitimacy regarding American conceptions of heroic republican masculinity and their transatlantic voyages, echoing the historical Kidd's and many other pirates' transformation once they left British shores. The pirate song at the end of Act I celebrates the pirates' departure to America as an act of freedom, waving the black flag "o'er us, rovers free" (16) and is taken up as an epithet to Act II by a quote from the folk song "The Ballad of Captain Kyd," which represents the pirates' transoceanic mobility as a break of rule, melodramatically and metaphorically enacted as a question-

ing of the legitimacy of prevailing antebellum class and gender (if not racial) conventions:[10] "My name is Captain Kyd, as I sailed, as I sailed, / My name is Captain Kyd, / And so wickedly I did, / All laws I did forbid, as I sailed" (17).

Pirate melodramas were significant in this way as they asked what would come after "forbidding" old laws and cross-Atlantic relocations. Like many others, both Blackbeard and Kyd represent piratical heroes not in opposition to established society, economic relations, and political power (in New York and South Carolina, respectively), but by emphasizing freedom and the myth of the self-made man.

Conclusion

The Bowery labeled itself "the cradle of American drama" (qtd. in Odell, Vol. 7, 488), de-emphasizing the fact that in the antebellum era many plays, including nautical melodramas, still were of British origin, existed in British and American versions (Davis 686), or dramatized both English and American popular fiction, from Sir Walter Scott to James Fenimore Cooper.[11] Many U.S. playwrights, Meserve observes, "took advantage of the scarcity of plays in America and tried to fill this acknowledged void by adapting the latest popular English or American fiction and by promoting nationalism with dramatized events from American history" (*Heralds* 145). What I have presented in this essay is a glimpse into two popular plays, their transatlantic voyages, and negotiations of gender via class and economic discourse. Following Jacky Bratton's notion of "the contending discourses of melodrama" (38), I read the plays as negotiating different versions of masculinity (and, to a lesser extent, femininity) in a period of immigration, industrial growth, and socioeconomic transformation primarily by means of contrast (the Blackbeard Company and Candid; Robert and Mark), humor, and irony. These spectacular plays, despite their formulaic nature (brave hero, heroine's chastity attacked by villain, stock side characters) performed "America" in the sense that the very concept of an American nation is a "performed trope" (Gainor 9; see also Bank, *Culture*),

10 Sawyer's Southern background and the general racism of the day are reflected by the play's black slave side characters, represented as fools serving for pure entertainment.

11 I follow Jim Davis's claim here that "[m]elodrama evolved and changed throughout the nineteenth century and as a genre, demonstrates continual slippage and refashioning" (688).

representing itself to itself as well as to others as an onstage "foundational fiction," to use Doris Sommer's term, in which patriotic and heterosexual romance discourses are intertwined to engender productive citizens.

Antebellum theater "was not simply a place where audiences passively absorbed […] problematic representations of national virtue, but rather an arena where the question of national character was subject to […] contestation" (Mullen 42). As the two examples discussed above show, patterns of identification in melodrama leave space for ambivalence and uncertainty in a time of national identity crisis (Kelleter and Mayer 12) and a crisis of masculinity vis-à-vis an increasing "feminization of American culture" towards the mid-century (Douglass). (Male) villains constitute the central figures and driving forces of both and are responsible for the culminating spectacle scene, including the works of fire and water (Herget 20-24). Yet it is this appeal to senses and sensibilities that was used to create affective unity within the framework of a "folk" patriotism (replete with the usual exclusions of racial and social Others) and the nation-state, following Douglass A. Jones:

> The aesthetics of melodrama work in such a way as to create a space where subjects with different ideologies—e.g. liberalism/socialism; rule of the majority/rule of propertied elite; paternalism/working-class solidarity—can exist in a sort of sentimental harmony […]. Shared sentimentality […] was the mechanism by which hierarchies, such as those reflected in ticket prices and seating location as well as ideological differences, would be collapsed. (66-67)

Despite the search for both a specific American theater and a specific American masculinity, American nautical and piratical plays in general, like their transatlantic counterparts, served as "national celebrations of victory" (Glenn 150), entertainment, and reinforcement of patriotic fervor. Clearly, then, the construction of a specifically American masculinity in stage melodrama needs to be understood transatlantically as well as in terms of the cultural translation of gender constructs by melodramatic means across a fast-changing populace, including ever-new waves of immigrants.

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Appendix: Pirate Plays Staged in the U.S., 1820-1860

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
1	*The Corsair*		1802	pantomime	Chestnut (Philadelphia)		
2	*Black Beard*		1812	pantomime	Chestnut (Philadelphia)		
3	*The Bold Buccaneers; or, The Discovery of Robinson Crusoe*		1817	melodrama	Park (NY), Sep. 11, 1817	Defoe	
4	*The Bride of Abydos*	William Dimmond	1818	nautical melodrama	Bowery, 1823?		New York: Longworth
5	*The Corsair*	Edwin Clifford Holland	1818	melodrama	Charleston, 1818	Byron	Charleston: A.E. Millar
6	*The Pirate*		1822	drama	Alexandria, June 26, 1822	Scott	
7	*The Sea Devil, or The Cornwall Pirate*		1823	melodrama	Lafayette (NY)		

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
8	*Blackbeard*	Lemuel Sawyer	1824	comedy		Blackbeard	
9	*The Freebooters*		1827	opera			
10	*The Buccaneers, A Romance of Our Own Country*	Terentius Phlogobombus (Samuel Benjamin Helbert Judah)	1827	melodrama/ satire			
11	*Red Rover, or, The Outlaw of the Ocean*	Samuel Henry Chapman	1827?	drama	Lafayette, Park (NY), 1827/28/29 seasons	J.F. Cooper	Philadelphia: F. Turner
12	*The Red Rover or, The Mutiny of the Dolphin*	Edward Fitz-Ball	1827/28	nautical drama	Lafayette, Park (NY)	J.F. Cooper	London: John Cumberland
13	*The Castle of the Lake, or The Pirates of Tripoli*		1828	Barbary play	Circus (NY)?		

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
14	*The Battle of New Orleans*		1828		Lafayette (NY)	Lafitte	
15	*Captain Kyd; or, The Wizard of the Sea*	Joseph S. Jones	1830	drama	National (Boston), 1830	Kidd	
16	*The Water Witch*	C.W. Taylor	1830		Park (NY), March 21, 1820	J.F. Cooper	
17	*The Demon Ship, or, The Pirate of the Ocean*		1831	melodrama	Bowery (NY), April 25, 1831		
18	*The Water Witch*	James S. Wallace	1832			J.F. Cooper	
19	*The Rover's Bride, or, The Bittern's Swamp*		1832?	melodrama	Bowery (NY)		

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
20	*Il Pirata*	Charles Nodier, Charles Maturin	1833	opera	Bowery (NY)	Bellini	
21	*The French Buccaneers*		1833	melodrama	Bowery (NY)		
22	*Black Beard, or, The Crew of the Revenge*	Rice	1833		Bowery (NY)?	Blackbeard	
23	*The Arab Chief and the Pirate of the East*		1834	Barbary play			
24	*Wizard Skiff, or The Tongueless Pirate Boy*		1834	melodrama	Philadelphia, Dec. 20, 1834		
25	*The Barnegat Pirates*					Kidd	
26	*The Spanish Pirates; or, A Union of the Flags*	H.J. Conway	1835				

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
27	*Lafitte, Pirate of the Gulf*	Louisa Medina	1836	nautical drama	Bowery (NY)	Lafitte, Ingraham	
28	*LaFitte: The Pirate of the Gulf*	James Rees	1837	nautical drama	Franklin (New Orleans)	Lafitte, Ingraham	
29	*La Fitte*	Charlotte Barnes Conner	1837	nautical drama	New Orleans	Lafitte, Ingraham	
30	*The Pirate Boy*	Jonas B. Philips	1837	melodramatic opera	National (Boston)	Bellini, Marryat	
31	*La Fitte*	James Gates Percival				Lafitte	
32	*Koeuba, or The Pirate of the Capes*	Edward Fitzball	1837				
33	*The Pirate's Oath*		1838		Franklin (New Orleans)		
34	*The Black Schooner, or The Pirate Slaver Armistad*	"a popular author"	1839	nautical melodrama	Bowery (NY)	Amistad case	

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
35	*Zampa, the Red Corsair*	William Mitchell	184?	melodrama	Olympic (NY)		
36	*The Pirate's Signal, or, The Bridge of Death*			nautical melodrama	Bowery (NY)		
37	*The Pirate of Hurlgate*				Chatham Garden (NY)	Kidd?	
38	*The Pirate's Doom*		1840		Bowery (NY)		
39	*Moll Pitcher, or, The Pirate Priest*	J.S. Jones	1841		Bowery (NY), 1843	Moll Pitcher	
40	*The Pirate's Legacy; or, The Wreckers' Fate*	Charles H. Saunders	1843	melodrama	Bowery (NY), Dec.		

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
41	*The Pirate's Cave*		1844		Bowery (NY)		
42	*Murrell the Land Pirate*	Burke	1845				
43	*The Land Pirate; or, Yankee in Mississippi*	Nathaniel Bannister					
44	*Murrell, the Western Land Pirate*	Nathaniel Bannister	183?				
45	*Captain Kyd, or, The Witch of Hell Gate*		1846		Bowery (NY)	Kidd	
46	*Theodosia, the Pirate's Prisoner*	William Henry Rhodes	1846	tragedy			New York: Edward Walker

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
47	*The Pirate's Revenge*				Greenwich		
48	*Corsair's Revenge*		1839/40		Walnut, Philadelphia		
49	*Black Beard, the Black Cruiser*		1847		Bowery (NY)	Blackbeard	
50	*Gonzalvo; or, The Corsair's Doom*	Charles Williams	1848	tragic opera			Philadelphia: Collins
51	*The Pirate's Isle*		1849	ballet			
52	*The Corsair's Bride*		1850/51		National (NY)		
53	*The Freebooter*		1850/51?		National (NY)		

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
54	*Bertram; or, The Sicilian Pirate*	Charles Maturin	1850/51?		National (NY)		
55	*Pirate of the Isles*	N.H. Belden Clarke	1851/52?	romantic drama	Bowery (NY)		French's Standard Drama 333, 1870?
56	*The Pirate Doctor*		1853		St. Charles (NY)		
57	*The Pirates of the Mississippi*		1855/56		Bowery (NY)		
58	*The Pirate's Bride*		1855/56	variety	Odeon (NY)		
59	*Conrad the Corsair*		1856/57	burlesque	Bowery (NY)	Byron	
60	*Ban Oussel Dhu*		1858		Bowery (NY)	Grace O'Malley	

	TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	GENRE	US PREMIERE	BASIS	PUBLICATION
61	*Our Mess, or, The Pirate Hungers of the Gulf*	John F. Poole	1859?		Bowery (NY)	Ned Buntline	
62	*The Privateer and the Pirate, or, Our Country's Flag*	John F. Poole			Bowery (NY)		
63	*The Female Buccaneer, or The Traitor's Doom*				Bowery (NY)	Ned Buntline	
64	*The Pirate Husband or The Ensanguined Shirt*			parody			

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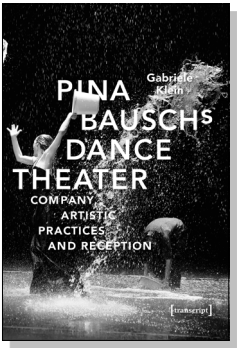

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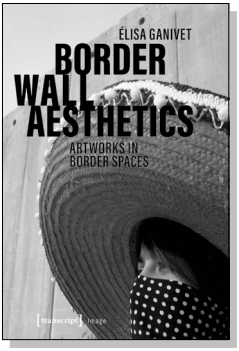

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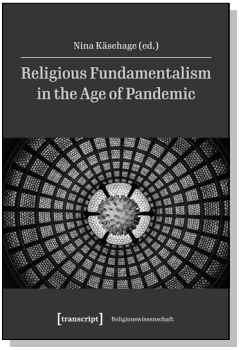

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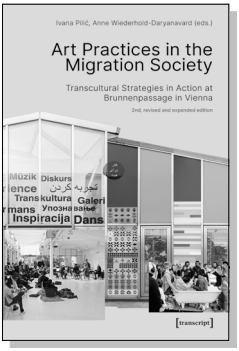

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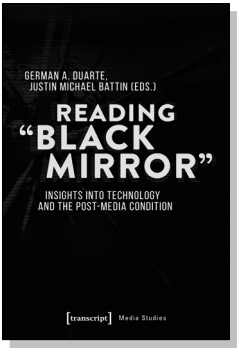

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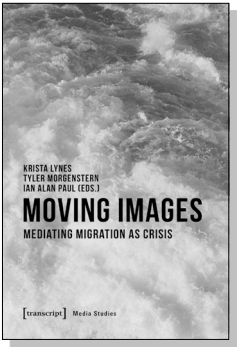

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