BUMPKIN RISING: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN IDENTITY THROUGH THE COUNTRY BUMPKIN CHARACTER IN AMERICAN MANNERS PLAYS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, the country bumpkin character type is analyzed as a reflection of American identity. In the English tradition, the country bumpkin is often the object of ridicule because of his ignorance and buffoonish mistakes, but in America this type morphs into a freedom loving character imbued with common sense, a strong will, and a distrust of class structures. In this study, the country bumpkin type is used to look at the formation of a national identity and how the constructed nature of that identity privileges some aspects of society while ignoring or degrading others. The focus of this work is the bumpkin’s development in American theatre from its arrival in colonial America until the verge of World War Two. Each chapter examines the historical and cultural context of the time, applies that to a significant manners play of the period, and discusses American identity through the lens of the country bumpkin. The periods within the dissertation are framed by war, notably the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and World War One. The earlier chapters focus on England’s strong influence on the emerging nation and America’s struggle to form an independent identity. The middle section concentrates on America’s internal battles and the final chapter deals with the United States on its rise to world power. The embracing of this character is still popular today in all aspects of American culture and in addition to entertainment can be seen in our political candidates.
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INTRODUCTION

Equality is often professed to be one of the cornerstones of American identity, but history shows that concept to be restricted to a privileged few. Using theatre as a reflection of society, this dissertation analyzes the country bumpkin character type through its development in early America and how the type is shaped to fit the constructed identity of the new country. The primary questions of this work are how the country bumpkin in American manners plays has evolved and why it has developed in the way that it has. By tracing the changes in the country bumpkin type from English Restoration manners plays to the development of original American works, the façade and the falsities behind American identity are examined.

The value in studying manners plays and the changes in characters over a long period of time comes in the interplay between theatre and culture. The genre is rife with social commentary and provides an opportunity to investigate theatre's comments on society and in turn how culture affects theatre. Looking at the changing character types not only shows development in the theatre, but in society as well. This work offers an inspection of an American society that has long been concerned with identity, from its nationalistic interests to identity politics. It shows the role concepts of identity play in character construction and transformation, and the issues that introduces into a dramatic work. The way in which character types have both persisted and adapted to a new age expresses something significant about the cultures that produce the changes.

Convention and type studies of manners plays either seldom move beyond the Restoration, or are focused on one era and are not looking at the overall changes happening in the genre. Of the few studies that have a lengthy time period under examination, the focus is
usually on England. American works are given more attention in terms of character and identity development, but for many of these studies the time period is limited. Books with a broader view also tend to look not just at a single theatrical genre, but at multiple forms. Geoff Ward’s *The Writing of America: Literature and Cultural Identity from the Puritans to the Present* covers sermons, music, poetry and novels. He rather pointedly does not include theatre noting that “I decided at an early stage to ignore the American theatre. It would have been easy to include it, if only because the interesting American playwrights could be counted on the fingers following an accident with a bacon-slicer.”¹ While not all writers on the topic of American identity have the same negative view, most do not focus exclusively on the theatre. My research fills a gap in an underdeveloped area of theatre history. I build off of related studies, but give a more focused look at the development of character types in American manners plays and a macrohistorical view of changes in the character types and in the genre and how they relate to the development of American identity.

America is abundant with variations of the country bumpkin and one of the earliest examples is the Jonathan character. Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* (1787) was the first American-written and professionally staged comedy in the newly formed country and for many Jonathan was the highlight of the piece. He was amusing in his ignorance while at the same time appealing because of his forthrightness and patriotism. Nationalism was growing and Americans wanted to see what they perceived as native characters. Jonathan become symbolic with being an American and Tyler’s play proved to be deeply inspirational and influenced American country bumpkins well into the next century.

While *The Contrast* was the most significant appearance of the Jonathan character in American theatre, a stage Yankee named Jonathan appeared in Joseph Atkinson’s comic opera, *A Match for a Widow* the previous year in Ireland. As is to be expected with comic types, there were similarities in the Jonathans, but it is entirely possible that Tyler was not even aware of the existence of the other work. Despite not being the first appearance of Jonathan, *The Contrast* significantly raised the profile of the character in America. Atkinson’s play, though outside the scope of this study, is being mentioned because it speaks to the origins of Jonathan. At its core, America’s first “original” character is a country bumpkin type with British roots.

One of the issues addressed in this work is how American identity is frequently formed by its relationship to England. English culture and practices had a firm hold on the American colonies even after they formed into an independent country. The plays performed were usually English in origin and were frequently staged by companies that were also English. Gradually, with separation from their English roots, the European inhabitants of America wanted their theatre to be more reflective of their own society and there was a need to see a more Americanized figure in the familiar theatrical form. Even with the strong desire for an American character, England's initial imprint on the United States remained and is evident in merely the frequent use of the manners form.

There are some terms in this study that require explanation or some historical context. Freedom and equality are two of the cornerstones on which the United States was founded. The Declaration of Independence states, “that all men are created equal,” and the Constitution speaks of the rights and freedoms man should have. However, the Constitution also speaks of “free Persons” and “other Persons,” meaning that those cornerstone beliefs do not belong to everyone.

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Early America’s concept of freedom and equality was defined in relation to the British class system. The espoused values were in reference to the absence of aristocracy and an inflexible social hierarchy. Even amongst non-slaves, the concept of freedom and equality had caveats. In Creating an American Identity: New England, 1789-1825, Stephanie Kermes points out that Americans, “celebrated equality, but nevertheless believed in the natural leadership of talented elite and favored a system in which ordinary people zealously fulfilled their tasks and accepted their social position.”3 That is to say that Americans traded in one class system for another and it is with these limitations that freedom and equality are viewed.

In this work I reference identity and specifically American identity. One of my arguments is the paradoxical relationship between the oppressive reality of much of the country’s population and what is presented as the American identity. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall notes that identities:

arise from the narrativization of the self, but the necessarily fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity, even if the belongingness, the ‘suturing into the story’ through which identities arise is, partly, in the imaginary (as well as the symbolic) and therefore, always, partly constructed in fantasy, or at least within a fantasmatic field.4

Along with Hall’s theory, I incorporate theories on nationalism, that national identity is shaped in part through repetition and memory. Using these concepts, I explore the development of

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American identity by tracking the country bumpkin in manners plays in relation to the reality of the country and its people, as well as investigate America’s embracement of the character type.

Manners play is similar in meaning to comedy of manners or a drawing room play. As the review of the literature bears out, comedy of manners is often linked solely with Restoration comedy. I wish to use a phrase that encompasses more than one time period, which manners play does. Also, comedy of manners gives the impression of a setting limited to English high society. I use a slightly modified term that has less preconceived notions. A manners play is a social satire that is generally played for comedy or has a comic tone, though there are deeper societal implications in the piece. In this study the term refers to plays that are ultimately concerned with the expectations and rules of a specific society and the behavior of the people that operate within that society. The focus is on what Kenneth Muir describes as the often "superficial and transient" rules of a specific time and society and serves to show the flaws of the society's shallow rules and the faults of the people in that society. The plays of this genre tend to deal with sets of people maneuvering in the upper echelons of socioeconomic status, or the white and wealthy of a patriarchal society. Within these plays there is a battle between what the characters desire and the social expectations of their age. The genre is also overly concerned with its own era. Texts in the genre frequently give multiple indicators of their currentness and they speak of and to a specific period in time.

The manners form has been used for centuries to break down and shed light upon the social mores and environment of the age in which the plays are written. Regardless of when this style of play is composed, it is based on conventions and makes use of character types to make

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its points. The function of the types remains quite similar in different time periods, but adjustments are made to speak to the play's contemporary audience.

While my focus is America, I am beginning in Restoration England because this is the time and place when all the elements of manners plays combine and thrive as a recognizable genre. Certainly, this form did not suddenly materialize, as various aspects of it had long been present in drama. Character types have been around since theatre and literature's beginnings and are recognizable in Menander, Chaucer, and the *Commedia dell'arte* among others. The stock characters of *Commedia*, which was enormously popular in seventeenth century France, served as an influence to one of the biggest precursors of Restoration manners plays, Molière. The comedic works of Molière along with the humour plays and city comedies of Ben Jonson are primary influences on manners plays, but it is not until the Restoration where this kind of play fully flourished. After the success in the period, this style of play remains a recognizable genre.

There are many definitions of when the Restoration period of drama ends and begins. In going strictly by historical markers, it would have started in 1660 when the monarchy was restored and Charles II took the English throne. By this mode of thinking the period would have ended when Charles II died in 1685 or possibly when his brother James II left the throne in 1688. However, many critics extend this period to the early 1700s because of the stylistic similarities of the work. The definition I am using is the one adopted by the Regents Restoration Drama Series that states:

A strict definition of the word [Restoration] is unacceptable to everyone, for it would exclude, among many other plays, those of Congreve. If to the historian it refers to the period between 1660 and 1685 (or 1688), it has long been used by the

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6 Both James II and Charles II were the sons of the executed King Charles I.
student of drama in default of a more precise term to refer to plays belonging to the dramatic tradition established in the 1660s, weakening after 1700, and displaced in the 1730s. It is in this extended sense – imprecise though justified by academic custom – that the word is used in this series, which includes plays first produced between 1660 and 1737.\footnote{John Loftis, “Regents Restoration Drama Series,” *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977) v.}

To gauge the evolution of character types, it is first necessary to make the types clear and establish criteria for what constitutes a specific character type. I need to stress that when speaking of evolution and development I am not claiming a wholly positive progression. My intent in using these terms is to denote modification in the types over a long stretch of time and not to ascribe a positive or negative judgment through these terms. To belong to a category, a type must have set characteristics or operate in a specific manner. There are a multitude of character types and not every manners play has a full representation of all of the types. I focus on two types that are heavily featured in the genre: the country bumpkin and its frequent converse the truewit. The base elements of the character types have been determined through analysis as well as through the work of other scholars. I will go into further detail in the review of the literature, but some of the books I draw upon are Elisabeth Mignon’s *Crabbed Age and Youth* (1947), R.C. Sharma’s *Themes and Conventions in the Comedy of Manners* (1965), and Agnes V. Persson’s *Comic Character in Restoration Drama* (1975). With the essentials of the types established, their development can be tracked.

The country bumpkin is generally naive and honest and sometimes crude or uneducated. Despite the lack of polish, they are not usually stupid characters and voice an outside perspective from inside the largely urban society being depicted. The group that the country bumpkin finds
themselves in will often think that the outsider is intellectually lacking, but that opinion is held because the bumpkin is not fully versed in the ways of the society. While the type's provincialism is satirized, they are also used to show the problems in a society through their honesty and naiveté.

A prime example of the country bumpkin type appears in William Congreve’s *Way of the World* (1700) in the character of Sir Wilfull. When coming into the city he is unfamiliar with many of the superficial society niceties and amuses the town characters with his rustic language and appearance. He does not excel at witty banter, but is straightforward in his speech. While other characters mock him for his manners, he proves to be more gallant than many of the so-called gallants in the society he is visiting.

*The Way of the World* also provides a truewit example. Like most truewits, Mirabell is not virtuous, but he is not without virtue. There is ample evidence of his misdeeds, but he attempts to correct his most egregious errors. Mirabell wants Millamant and by the play’s end he gets Millamant. With his manipulations, Mirabell not only achieves his goal, but he also outmaneuvers the piece’s villain and saves the woman he once wronged. He controls the situation and gets what he wants all with sparkling wit and repartee.

In the English tradition, truewits are often the center of a work. Truewits are cleverer than the other characters and tend to have few issues in attaining whatever it is they desire. However, they are not perfect characters. They have faults, but they are self-aware. Truewits know that they are in a corrupt society and serve to point out that corruption from the inside. The term truewit applies to a character’s high intelligence, quick humor, and the inborn nature of those traits. In a world of affectations, a truewit is sincerely clever and funny. The character's actions and comments may be artificial, but the wit that conjures them is not. In many ways, the
truewit is the antithesis to the country bumpkin and as such provides a valuable gauge to the bumpkin’s development. The relationship between the two types also illustrates the growing divide between America and England with the common sense-speaking, bumpkinish American type moving into the central role as opposed to the witty and educated truewit character.

There are two major areas that must be investigated to answer the questions of this dissertation: the manner plays and the cultural environment when the plays were written. An exhaustive analysis of all the dramatic literature in this large a period would be nearly impossible and exceeds the scale of this work. I use representative plays from the genre. All of the American plays I use are social satires that contain character types and were written and performed during the chapter’s time period. As this study deals with English influence and the American development of types and identity, the nationality of the playwrights was taken into consideration. This does not mean that the authors had to be born in the United States, but that the playwrights had to spend the bulk of their lives in the country and have their lives shaped by the country’s history. The first chapter sets up the English model of the types and uses a play written by an English playwright. The following chapters focus on the developments in America and uses plays by Americans. The model play, The Way of the World, was selected because it is the epitome of the genre and contains prime examples of the truewit and country bumpkin types. Additionally, the play was available in print in the American colonies as early as 1764, and likely earlier to anyone traveling to Great Britain.

As the plays and the culture inform each other, it was vital to choose American plays that were popular in their own time. Popularity and success are relative terms that must be determined by the contemporaneous culture. While long runs are indicative of a successful show,

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8 The Way of the World will be gone over in more detail in the next chapter.

9 Pennsylvania Journal (Philadelphia), March 29, 1764, pg. 3.
what equals a long run is different in different eras, so a quantitative analysis is not used. Likewise, the number of cities where a play was produced is not an adequate measure as the country, and the available markets to perform, grew over time. Length and breadth of productions is a considerable factor, but those elements are measured in comparison to works from the same period. All of the plays selected for this study were popular in their own time and speak to the culture that created them.

The history and culture from when each drama was written plays a major part in character formation. As manners plays comment on society, the cultural environment around the plays is investigated. What is happening in society for the playwrights to be commenting on? Major historical moments/movements that occur during the same period as the plays are discussed and used to frame the time periods. Since each chapter builds on the events of the past, they are arranged in chronological order.

War serves as a primary framework for this piece as it plays an essential role in the development of the United States and its people. Historian Lloyd Kramer posits that, “all national identities, for example, emerge through repeated descriptions of national cultural differences, national geographical spaces, and the history of famous national events.”¹⁰ In these terms America’s identity is largely shaped through its exceptionalism, manifest destiny and the mythos of the frontier, and its most notable of “national events” - war. Race also plays a pivotal role in the development of American identity. For a country that places such an importance on equality, the United States is racked by problematic race relations that stand in diametric opposition to its declared status as being an unparalleled champion for freedom. It is often the lack of equality and the act of othering that solidifies what it means to be an American. The

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desire to amass land lead to infringement on the liberty of many and often that acreage was
gained through countless battles. The nation was born out of revolution, cemented its sovereignty
through war, became an imperialist nation through war, and emerged as a world power through
war.

Given the scope of this research, the review of the literature covers multiple time periods
and events. While the country bumpkin in America and its reflection of the construction of
American identity is the main interest, the history of the character types that leads into this study
is vital. Various conventions and characters from the Restoration period have been looked at
before and works on comedy of manners in general have also been done. However, these studies
are almost entirely focused on the Restoration period and the term comedy of manners is
somewhat synonymous with Restoration comedy because of this practice. There are many books
that look into the Restoration period and they are often about the same few authors. The focus of
these studies is usually George Etherege, William Wycherley, and William Congreve with the
occasional branching out to the likes of George Farquhar, Aphra Behn, and John Dryden. Key
books in this area include John Palmer's *The Comedy of Manners* (1962), Virginia Ogden
Birdsall's *Wild Civility: The English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (1970), and Donald
Bruce's *Topics of Restoration Comedy* (1974). Thomas Fujimura's *The Restoration Comedy of
Wit* (1952) fits in with the other general Restoration books. It is notable because it introduces the
comedy of wit term that is frequently used in a similar way as Restoration comedy or comedy of
manners. Like many of the other books in this grouping, there is a focus on Etherege,
Wycherley, and Congreve. The main difference between Edward Burns' *Restoration Comedy:
Crises of Desire and Identity* and numerous other Restoration studies is that Burns looks at
authors outside the main three. I should also note that despite the book's title, there is not really a
major emphasis on identity.

Bonamy Dobrée's *Restoration Comedy 1660-1720* (1924) gives an overall view to the
period and focuses on the main dramatists. He expands to seven and not just the big three.
Dobrée also has a chapter entitled "The Comedy of Manners" which discusses the differences
between that genre and the comedy of humours, a subject that I touch upon in my study. T.B.L.
Webster's *The Birth of Modern Comedy of Manners* (1959) also deals with the origins of
manners comedy. Webster's main interest is in the beginnings of comedy with the Ancients in
Greek New Comedy.

Martin Ellehauge's *English Restoration Drama: Its Relation to Past and Contemporary
French Drama: From Jonson via Moliere to Congreve* (1933) deals with multiple genres, time
periods, and countries. It is of note because it looks into the roots of Restoration drama and
offers a larger scope, covering plays from the Elizabethan period through the Restoration.

Clarence S. Paine's *The Comedy of Manners (1660-1700): A Reference Guide to the Comedy of
the Restoration* (1941) provides a guide to writings on the period broken down into the
categories of history and criticism, dramatists, and theatre.

While many of the general books on the Restoration contain information on character
types, there are a few that go into more depth that are worth mentioning. *Themes and
Conventions in the Comedy of Manners* by R.C. Sharma covers the Restoration period and does
exactly what the title implies by looking at conventions in the plays. Along with that, character
types in the plays, chiefly the ones of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, are discussed.

Elisabeth Mignon's *Crabbed Age and Youth: The Old Men and Women in the Restoration
Comedy of Manners*, again focuses on the celebrated authors of the era with the specific interest
being the depiction of the old and young and the relationship between the two. In that pursuit, character types are discussed particularly those of the old and foolish variety. It only dissects a small amount of material, but Anita Sieber's *Character Portrayal in Congreve's Comedies: The Old Batchelour, Love for Love, and The Way of the World* (1996) has a useful section on the character types found in the plays that can be applied to other plays in the genre. Agnes V. Persson's *Comic Character in Restoration Drama* (1975) gives a nice rundown of the various kinds of characters that are found in plays of the period. Elaine M. McGirr's *Eighteenth-Century Characters: A guide to the Literature of the Age* (2007) offers an introduction to multiple kinds of characters in different genres of plays and novels. Harold C. Knutson's *The Triumph of Wit: Molière and Restoration Comedy* (1988), obviously delves into the connections between Molière and Restoration comedies, but also goes into the makeup of manners comedies and their character types.

The realities of theatre performance during the Restoration period plays a vital role in the forming of the types and the genre, so along with character studies the era’s theatrical culture is analyzed. J.L. Styan's *Restoration Comedy in Performance* (1986) and Peter Holland's *The Ornament of Action: Text and Performance in Restoration Comedy* (1971), examine the theatrical conditions during the time when the genre and its character types are taking hold.

There are not that many studies in this area that cover multiple time periods, but there are a few worth noting. Kenneth Muir's *The Comedy of Manners* (1970) focus is also on the Restoration and its main dramatists, but his last chapter also goes forward, though very briefly, to mention the "decline and renewal" of the genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Newell W. Sawyer's *The Comedy of Manners from Sheridan to Maugham: the Study of the Type as a Dramatic Form and as a Social Document* (1931) and David L. Hirst's *Comedy of Manners*
(1979) are notable because they are not restricted to just the Restoration period. Sawyer skips the Restoration all together and discusses the time after the Restoration to Maugham in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Hirst's book covers the Restoration through the 1970s, although it is rather short so it does not go into great depth. The most detail is given to the twentieth century authors Pinter, Osborne, and Orton. A particularly relevant dissertation, Kathryn Wardell’s *The Rake’s Progress: Masculinities on Stage and Screen* (2010), is valuable because it tracks a character type through a similarly expansive amount of time as I do in my own study. Her emphasis, masculinity, and use of film differ from my own work, but her investigation into a character type is significant.

There are many studies that deal in some way with identity as it relates to characters. While it deals with a number of plays outside this study's parameters, Cynthia Lowenthal's *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage* (2003) exploration into the concept of performing identities is relevant to my research. Lisa A. Freeman's *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (2002) is of use because it examines identity construction through characters. Audrey Jaffe's *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (2000) centers on how characters in novels can elicit sympathy and discusses characters and collective identities.

Works that deal specifically with American characters and/or identity issues include Winifred Morgan’s *An American Icon Brother Jonathan and American Identity* (1988) that examines the American character type in a number of different media. Cameron C. Nickels' *New England Humor: From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War* (1993) discusses American character and identity in various forms. Orrin E. Klapp's *Heroes, Villains, and Fools: The Changing American Character* (1962) is not theatre centric, but looks at American social types
and how they relate to the culture. Geoff Ward’s *The Writing of America: Literature and Cultural Identity from the Puritans to the Present* (2002) has little interest in theatre, but investigates the creation of identity in America through other mediums. S.E. Wilmer’s *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities* (2002) delves into national identity and performance with an interest in showing how those depictions can act to support or oppose social norms. Maura Jortner’s *Playing “America” on Nineteenth-Century Stages; or, Jonathan in England and Jonathan at Home* (2005) is a dissertation with a post-colonial emphasis that looks at the formation and portrayal of an American character in the United States and England.


Moving into the next century of theatre, Tice L. Miller’s *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (2007) gives a good overview of a large time span. Books on specific playwrights also give a context not just to their work, but the contemporary theatre as well. For example, Anna Cora Mowatt’s *Autobiography of an Actress; or, Eight Years on the Stage* (1854) and Paul H. Musser and James N. Barker’s *James Nelson Barker 1784-1858: With a Reprint of His Comedy "Tears and Smiles"* (1929).

Bruce A. McConachie’s *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (1992) and David Grimsted’s *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850* (1968) provide excellent information on America’s most popular genre. For works specifically about one of the most successful plays of the genre, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* see Sarah Meers’s *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (2005) and John W. Frick’s *Uncle Tom's Cabin on the American Stage and Screen* (2012).


American Theatre: Volume II 1870-1945 (1998) provide a wide range of excellent articles covering a large swath of time.

The most significant contextual markers in this dissertation are America’s wars. The War of 1812 is often overlooked in history, but plays a key role in the development of national identity. General information on the war can be found in Donald R. Hickey’s The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict (2012) and Carl Benn’s The War of 1812 (2003). For a British perspective on the war see Jeremy Black’s The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon (2009). For information on the importance of the navy during the war see, George C. Daughan’s 1812: The Navy's War (2011), Ian W. Toll’s Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy (2006), and James Barnes’ Naval Actions of The War of 1812 (1969). Works that focus more specifically on Andrew Jackson’s role in the war include Robert Vincent Remini’s The Battle of New Orleans (1999) and Donald R. Hickey’s Glorious Victory: Andrew Jackson and the Battle of New Orleans (2015). More details on the cultural relation between European Americans and American Indians can be found in Louise K. Barnett’s The Ignoble Savage: American Literary Racism, 1790-1890 (1975) and Susan Scheckel’s The Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture (1998).

Another forgotten war, the Mexican-American War, was also key in the nation’s development as it too added mass amounts of land to the country and would also prove to be a catalyst for the Civil War. For more information on the Mexican War see Otis A. Singletary’s The Mexican War (1960), Robert Walter Johannsen’s To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination (1985), and David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler’s The Mexican War (2006).


Problems with the draft, riots, and racism were rampant during the Civil War era. For more information on these issues see Leslie M. Harris’ *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (2003), Alison Clark Efford’s *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (2013), Tyler Gregory Anbinder’s *Nativism and...*

Finally, the last war that will be dealt with in detail is the First World War. For information on the lead up to America’s entrance into the war see Justus D. Doenecke’s *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of America's Entry into World War I* (2011). Economics played a large part in the United States entrance into the war. For information on the finances of World War One see Charles Gilbert’s *American Financing of World War I* (1970), Hew Strachan’s *Financing the First World War* (2004), and Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison’s *The Economics of World War I* (2005).

This dissertation covers many economic peaks and valleys in America’s history from arguments over a national bank to the effects of the Great Depression. For information on the

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*Niles’ National Register* and *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* are both excellent sources for contemporary coverage and statistics on financial information and *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition*, (2006) provided key statistical information on numerous periods for this study.


While books on America’s theatre, economy, and military actions make up the majority of this study’s secondary sources, there are other, more specific works that provided invaluable context. These works include information on the Mather family, Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (1971) and Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (1984), as well as a history of prostitution in New York found in Larry Whiteaker’s *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860* (1997), and a study on sanitation found in Martin V. Melosi’s *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (2000).


Studies on the social and cultural environment of the United States include Richard Hofstadter’s *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (1963), Jean V. Matthews’ *Toward a New Society: American Thought and Culture, 1800-1830* (1991), Stephen J. Whitfield’s A

There are five chapters in the body of this dissertation and each contains historical context and an in-depth analysis of a significant play. Chapter one, “America and the Restoration: A Genre Takes Hold,” provides the foundation that the following chapters build upon. This chapter looks into American theatre before The Contrast and the colonists’ connection to England. Early America’s dependence on England for theatre and popular plays in the colonies are discussed. The origins of the plays and character types are traced and a brief history of the Restoration and how it helped to mold the genre and character types is explored. William Congreve’s The Way of the World is used as a model to illustrate the key characteristics of the country bumpkin and the truewit in the English tradition. Finally, the origins of the Jonathan character are discussed and lead into chapter two.

In the second chapter, “Revolutionary Times,” British theatre is still dominant in America. Early America’s often anti-theatrical stances are investigated as well as theatre’s continuing presence in education despite the negative opinions. In addition to the religious and economic reasons for many anti-theatrical measures, the growing concern with theatre being a cultural product of England during a time when the relationship between England and the colonies was fissuring, caused another obstruction to the development of American theatre. These tensions are explored along with theatre’s endurance despite bans and a revolution. The Beaux’ Stratagem and the importance of its country bumpkin type is examined as well as its popularity before, during, and after the war. After the war the desire for American theatrical voices increases and the want of an identity outside of the previously held British identity is
studied. Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* is the central play of this chapter and is examined in terms of its American origin and how its use of character types is similar and uniquely American in comparison to the English model.

Chapter three, “Fashioning Culture,” focuses on the United States’ heavy ties to England, despite the Revolution and the desire for an identity separate from Great Britain. America’s cultural ties to England and what that means for the theatre is analyzed. This chapter looks at the frequent cry for more American voices in the theatre while there is simultaneously a stigma on American playwrights for not being as prestigious as their foreign counterparts. The War of 1812 provides historical context as it is used as another attempt by America to establish a separate identity outside its relationship to Great Britain. Through the war and its ramifications, including the growing power and popularity of Andrew Jackson, the rise of anti-intellectualism in America and its effect on the development of the character types is explored. The focal play for this chapter is Anna Cora Mowatt’s *Fashion*.

Chapter four, “America Asunder,” highlights the growing rift between the Northern and Southern sections of the United States through the Mexican American War and the Civil War. During this period the popularity of melodrama and variety shows, particularly minstrel shows, increases and the method of reaching audiences alters. Through the Mexican American War the size of the country expands exponentially and railroad construction increases the ability of shows to travel and widens the theatre audience. This chapter’s featured play, Charles H. Hoyt’s *A Texas Steer*, plays to a larger and more dispersed audience than the previously showcased plays and reflects the racial and regional issues of a post-Civil War America. The ravages of war and reconstruction make an indelible mark on American identity that is seen in the character types.
In chapter five, “America Ascendant,” vaudeville is a popular form of entertainment that appeals to a wide range of people in the increasingly diverse society. This chapter also sees the rise of radio and film as mass entertainment. Contextually, this chapter deals with the Progressive Era, World War One, and the Great Depression. The progressive movement is seen not just in the politics of the time, but on the stage as well, with playwrights incorporating the social issues of the day into their plays. Problem plays, both domestic and foreign, found popularity during this period and while melodrama still reigned supreme, the popularity of social satires increased in the new century. Langdon Mitchell’s *A New York Idea* is shown as an example of a manners play that deals with a contemporary issue, divorce. The play serves as a bridge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how what it means to be an American is changing. The Spanish American War marks America’s transformation into a fully imperialist country and presages its entry into the First World War and international affairs. This major development naturally affects the national identity and the evolution of the country bumpkin. The chasm between the upper and lower classes becomes most apparent as the nation falls into the Great Depression and highlights how unattainable the American identity is for most of the population. The central play of this chapter, Philip Barry’s *The Philadelphia Story*, deals with all of these issues and with the changing types and American identity moving into an age where the United States is no longer a fledgling nation, but a national power.

This study analyzes the evolution of the country bumpkin in America and up to the brink of the Second World War when America was on the precipice of becoming a dominant global force in political power and culture. While this work ends as America ascends to a world power, the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries are fertile ground
for continuation of this research. In today’s political climate, America’s connection and fondness with the anti-intellectual common sense man is more relevant than ever.
CHAPTER 1

America and the Restoration: A Genre Takes Hold

Before the American Revolution and the disputes leading up to it, many American colonists thought of themselves as English. Their roots were in Great Britain and much of their culture and learning came from there as well. Even after the Revolution, many Americans still felt the ties to the former ruling nation. Given that connection, it is only natural that the early artistic works from America should be deeply influenced by England. Country bumpkin and truewit types appear frequently in American manners plays and their development was directly influenced by English Restoration plays. In this chapter, American theatre before The Contrast and its roots in England are examined, The Way of the World is analyzed to show the characteristics of the two types, and the origins of the Jonathan character are explored.

Theatre in America was slow to develop for multiple reasons. There were religious beliefs that restricted performance and economic issues that prevented theatre development. In the early stages of the colonies, life was harsh and the emphasis was on survival and making the colonies economically worthwhile. The colonists were not sent to America to build a new country, they were meant to be productive for their home country. The cultural enrichment of the colonists while in America was not a priority. However, theatre did bloom and started to make headway in the British colonies. The records of early American drama are fragmentary, but it is clear that they were dependent on English works. As slow as theatre was to develop in

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general, it took even longer for American plays to be written and mounted.\footnote{For information on the plays and theatrical touring of colonial America see, Odai Johnson, William J. Burling, James Coombs, \textit{The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar} (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001) and Weldon B. Durham, ed., \textit{American Theatre Companies, 1749-1887} (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).} Along with it taking time for a country’s identity and voice to grow, there was also the question of who was performing. For the most part, the actors in the troupes performing in America were from England. It stands to reason that the plays the troupes would be familiar with and would have prepared for their American tours would be English in origin.

There were many kinds of plays performed by these troupes, tragedies were quite popular, but manners style plays dominated the mainpiece comedies. Information on theatre performances in the American colonies during the seventeenth century is sparse. Plays were written, but it is largely unknown if they were intended as closet dramas or if they were performed in some capacity. Through letters and diaries, there is evidence that there was theatrical activity, but more often than not the information is slight and the play and performers unknown.\footnote{Ethan Mordden, \textit{The American Theatre} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) 4.} In the eighteenth century, there is more concrete information on theatre in America. Theatre would become more prevalent during the 1700s, but there is also more evidence from this age because of the rise of newspapers and periodicals. Answering the questions of who was performing, where they were performing, and what they were performing was helped incredibly by the spread of papers. Newspapers and journals supplied more information on American theatre than was available in the past, but there was likely more information from this period to mention, as professional touring companies arrived from England.

From the 1730s and forward, manners plays are put on steadily in America. Most of these plays are from the Restoration period in England, or are plays that were clearly influenced
by Restoration plays. The plays of George Farquhar, Susannah Centlivre, and Colley Cibber proved to be quite popular. The comedies of Farquhar and Centlivre alone were produced over a hundred times between 1732 and 1774 when theatre was significantly curtailed because of the impending Revolution.\textsuperscript{14} While it is impossible to know the audience’s reaction to each play performance, a basic understanding of a play’s success can be ascertained. Simply looking at how many times a play is performed gives some idea of how well the work is received. A play being used for an actor’s benefit night would also indicate that the play was expected to be a success. It is also interesting to note where certain plays are performed. Are certain plays regional, or are they known and performed throughout the colonies?

As an example, William Congreve’s play \textit{Love for Love} (1695) was a well-known play, but not the most popular in terms of recorded performances. The first known performance of the play in America was at the First Nassau Street Theatre in New York in 1750.\textsuperscript{15} The play was also performed throughout the years in Charleston and Philadelphia. Records for those areas, while not complete, are much more thorough than in other parts of America and it is possible that the show was acted in more locations.

There are ten recorded productions of Congreve’s play, but the circumstances of the performances suggest that it was a well-received play and that it may have been performed more frequently. Of the performances, four of them were benefits and benefit shows were chosen to draw the largest possible audience to assure the biggest payday.\textsuperscript{16} Two of the benefits are of particular interest because of the recipients. March 1762 at the Chapel Street Theatre in New

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\textsuperscript{15} Johnson, \textit{The Colonial American Stage}, 137.

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York, the Douglass Company put on *Love for Love* with lead actor Lewis Hallam Jr. as the beneficiary, Hallam from the merged Hallam and Douglass Companies. 17 May 1770 at the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia, the play was used as a benefit for Mrs. Douglass.18 That two prominent members of the troupe would use *Love for Love* for their benefit indicates that they thought the play would be well attended by the theatre going public. In addition to these benefits, *Love for Love* closed a company’s season twice and was the last play staged before the holiday break.19 That means that of the ten known performances of the show, six of them were on days where it is reasonable to assume that the company expected to draw a sizeable audience. This information is provided not to insist on the likelihood that the plays were performed more times than records show, though that is quite probable, but to highlight the popularity of these kinds of plays and their pervasiveness in early American culture. These plays and the character types that populate them were well known in various regions of the colonies and most assuredly would have made an impression on the general audience and emerging theatre artists.

While *The Contrast* was an important marker in American theatre history because of its American connection, it was not particularly original and had a distinct English lineage. This trend would continue to be true in the American manners plays that were subsequently created. The plays had a similar structure and contained the same character types. To appreciate the nuances of the American versions of the types, it is necessary to analyze the English types and plays that initially introduce the types to America.


18Johnson, *The Colonial American Stage*, 364. At this point the troupe now performs under the moniker of the American Company, despite their mostly English make-up. It is clear that there was a growing anti-English sentiment and an even more powerful sense of nationalism erupting even though America was not yet a country.

19Johnson, *The Colonial American Stage*
The truewit and country bumpkin did not just spring forth during the Restoration rather the manners plays that were so popular during the period made great use of character types that had been in existence in some form for centuries. The drama of the Restoration age is interesting because of the void of theatre directly preceding the period. Because of the English Civil War and the Interregnum, the Restoration period is marked by its amalgamation of influences. Agnes Persson points out that early models for some of the types were present in literature from all over the world with England having its own early model of types from Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales.* Perhaps the earliest character type models are found in the works of Greek playwrights. Menander wrote an early form of the comedy of manners, *Dyskolos,* which uses similar types to the ones found in Restoration manners plays. There are of course differences, but the basic idea of the types is consistent.

Compounding the influence on English theatre was the changing demographics of the country. After Queen Elizabeth’s relatively stable rule, there was political unrest and a changing populace. The social structure of the country was changing with the population in London growing and with a steady increase in the number of wealthy merchants. This changing population altered the dynamics of society. There was ever present religious concerns, particularly having to do with the royalty and any hint of a Catholic leaning, which of course had a great deal to do with politics and political allegiance. There was also a growing split between Parliament and the monarchy, with each side wanting to have more power. All of these issues intertwined and expanded until civil war broke out in 1642, a battle that would ebb and flow for

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21 T.B.L. Webster’s *The Birth of Modern Comedy of Manners,* does not comment much on character types, but is useful in dissecting *Dyskolos* and covering the transition from old and middle comedy, to the new comedy of Menander.
the next eight years. It was also in 1642 that Parliament closed the theatres. Prince Charles fled to France and in 1649 King Charles I was executed. During this period many of the nobility and royal sympathizers also left England for continental Europe where they stayed in exile until the monarchy was restored.

In 1653 Oliver Cromwell installed himself as the Lord Protector of England and the bans on theatrical activities remained. That is not to say there was no theatre during this time period, but it was restricted and forced to the periphery. Theatre had been a vibrant part of English life, but for nearly twenty years it was pushed out of every day and mainstream life. The populace grew more and more tired of this reality and the Puritan power of the Protectorate weakened, especially after Cromwell’s death in 1658 and Prince Charles was asked to return to England and take the throne as Charles II two years later.

One of the results of so much of English society going to Europe during the Interregnum was that the Continental theatre influenced what future English theatre audiences would want to see and what practitioners would compose. The work of the Greeks carries on through many Roman dramatists and Menander’s *Dyskolos* even echoes in Molière’s *The Misanthrope*. Molière and French theatre in general were influential on Restoration theatre. Molière himself was heavily influenced by commedia dell'arte, which was abundantly popular in seventeenth century France.22 Molière’s plays had more structure and defined plot, but the reliance on character types used in commedia made an impression on his work. While he did not use typing to the same extent as commedia, character types populate his social satires.

Critics differ on just how influential Molière and French theatre actually was on Restoration theatre with some claiming that the Frenchman was largely irrelevant. In his study

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of the Restoration, John Palmer expressed the opinion that “Restoration comedy owed almost as little to France as to the English school it displaced. It was an independent growth springing spontaneously from the impulse of English Restoration society to view itself in reflection upon the stage.”\(^{23}\) That is quite the overstatement and the idea that Molière is the sole source for Restoration comedy is a large overstep in the other direction. What seems more likely and reasonable is that the exiled English court witnessed the work of Molière and other playwrights and developed an affinity for some of the French theatre customs. Molière was on the Parisian stages by 1658 so Charles II as well as English royalists would have had the opportunity to see some of his work.\(^{24}\) In addition to seeing Molière performed, his plays were available in print and would have been known to many Englishmen.\(^{25}\) Since the monarchy was restored in 1660 (and Molière died in 1673) Molière’s influence would have been limited, but the English royalists’ time watching Parisian theatre likely planted a seed of inspiration for rebuilding the London theatre scene.

Several English playwrights have at least used some of Molière’s plot points and scenes in their work. Bonamy Dobrée along with numerous others, have pointed out the connection between William Wycherley’s *The Plain Dealer* and Molière’s *Le Misanthrope*.\(^{26}\) Thomas


\(^{25}\) Pirated versions of plays were not uncommon and in addition to those versions, on occasion Molière attempted to forestall pirates by publishing a play first. Virginia Scott, *Molière: A Theatrical Life*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 106.

Shadwell, Edward Ravenscroft, John Dryden, Thomas Wright, and Mathew Medbourne all wrote adaptations or translations of Molière’s plays that were staged during the Restoration.28

Another precursor for the manners comedy of the Restoration, comes from English playwright Ben Jonson. Jonson’s influence comes through his humour plays that have heavily typed characters, and his city comedies that place the play’s action in contemporary London. Some of Jonson’s types were highly exaggerated even for typed characters, with their humours being expressed to an extreme degree. Less severe versions of some of Jonson’s ideas would appear in the Restoration types. Certainly, Jonson’s practice of naming characters by their dominant trait would remain popular through the Restoration. *Bartholomew Fair* was one of Jonson’s more popular plays in the Restoration and contained the very aptly named characters of Quarlous and Littlewit among others. The majority of Restoration era manners plays continued this naming tradition, for example in William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, the characters of Horner and Lady Fidget.

Jonson’s city comedies are relevant because they were social satires and made frequent contemporary references to the city – its people, places, and events. Many older English plays were set in far off places or different times, but Jonson’s city comedies were undeniably London. The use of a contemporary setting and writing of and for the society of the time was something that would appeal to Restoration dramatists. Kenneth Muir also points out the influence of Jonson by noting the large amount of critics and playwrights who referenced his work.29 The

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27 For his part, Shadwell adapted both *L'Avare* and *Tartuffe*.


opinions voiced varied greatly, but just the fact that they were so aware of Jonson speaks to his influence.

Jonson was particularly popular when the London theatres were first reopened and known productions of his works tapered off with more and more new plays being written. During the period *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *The Silent Woman* were Jonson’s most commonly produced plays. *The Alchemist* was produced eleven different times in the era and seven of those productions were staged in the first five years of the Restoration.\(^{30}\) There is also a record of *Bartholomew Fair* being staged eleven times during the same period, with five productions in 1661 alone.\(^{31}\) *The Silent Woman* was also frequently produced and was likely Jonson’s most influential play for reasons that will be discussed later. *The Silent Woman* was one of the first plays produced after the Restoration of the monarchy, and most of its productions were put on in the first five years of the period.

Jonson provided Restoration dramatists an abundance to draw from, but there were also some profound differences between him and the playwrights that drew from his work. Agnes Persson notes that, "the knowledge of values, morals, and professional ethics is often the main requirement in the didactic comedies of Jonson, whereas in Restoration comedies the emphasis is on awareness of the ways of the fashionable world."\(^{32}\) Basically, Jonson differs from the Restoration in his strident moral tone, but his plays provided elements that were adopted by Restoration dramatists.

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\(^{30}\) *London Stage*

\(^{31}\) *London Stage*

\(^{32}\) Persson 10-11
John Fletcher, be it his sole work or his collaborations with Francis Beaumont or Philip Massinger, proved to be one of the most popular dramatists during the early years of the Restoration period. Fletcher had forty plays he had a hand in writing or plays adapted from his work which were produced in the Restoration period. He wrote in multiple genres, but his comedies and tragicomedies were more frequently produced and made the largest impact on the dramatists of the Restoration. The Beaumont and Fletcher piece, *The Scornful Lady* was acted steadily throughout the period with fifteen recorded performances and with three other possible productions.

Fletcher was lacking the moral tone that was so prominent in Jonson’s plays and paints a less judgmental picture of society. In his essay ‘Shakespeare to Thee was Dull:’ The Phenomenon of Fletcher’s Influence” Robert Markley speaks of the laudatory praises of Beaumont and Fletcher that appear in a 1647 edition of their works and the importance of their use of language. He notes “for the Cavaliers, as for Dryden and other Restoration critics, Fletcher is the great refiner of the English language, the dramatist who brought the ‘conversation of gentlemen’ to the stage.”33 This relates to Fletcher’s influence on the truewit as the character type is the idealized representation of a man whose witty banter can make him at home in a society of gentleman while all the while undermining that society’s underpinnings. The leading men in Fletcher’s plays are precursors to the truewits of the Restoration. Muir makes the observation that Beaumont and Fletcher’s leading men seemed more in line with the gallants of the Restoration in that they were “less like real gentlemen.”34 Fletcher’s comedic male

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33 Robert Markley, Laurie Finke, eds., *From Renaissance To Restoration: Metamorphoses Of The Drama*, (Cleveland, Ohio: Bellflower Press, Case Western Reserve University, 1984) 107.

34 Muir 13
characters tended to be reluctant to settle down, roguish, and stylish all at once; all characteristics
that would be quite common in truewits.

With the return of the British monarchy and Charles II, there was a new theatrical
environment. In some ways things had opened up, for example women were now allowed on
stage, but in some ways things were more limited. Before the Interregnum, there were many
theatre troupes throughout the London area, but during much of the Restoration the number of
legal companies was cut drastically. For the majority of the period, there were generally two
licensed theatre companies in operation, and for stretches of time there was only one.

Several attempted to open theatres, including those that had the rights to form one, but
through legal maneuvering and the favor of the new King, Sir William Davenant and Thomas
Killigrew were the two men who ended up controlling the two early Restoration companies.35
Killigrew was in charge of The King’s Company and Davenant The Duke’s Company. The two
patents could be sold or inherited, so the leadership of the companies changed throughout the
period. The management of The King’s Company under Killigrew and later his son was abysmal
and the company combined with The Duke’s Company in 1682 to form The United Company.36
That single licensed theatre remained until 1695 when a group of disgruntled actors were given
permission to again form a second company. During the first part of the 1700s (until the
Licensing Act of 1737), control over the number of theatres relaxed and there were multiple
instances of temporary licenses being granted. However, through much of the Restoration the
number of legal companies was minute and far less than in the pre-Civil War era.

35 There were a number of men who had received license to perform through Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the
Revels, who had been responsible for licensing plays before the Civil War and was trying to continue his role after
the monarchy was restored. Additionally, George Jolly had a license from the King, but the monopoly of Davenant
and Killigrew would prevail.

36 David Thomas, Arnold Hare, eds., Restoration and Georgian England, 1660-1788, Theatre in Europe: A
Because of the small number of theatres, playwrights were well aware of the companies they were writing for and to some extent the strengths and weaknesses of the casts. Competition was also quite fierce and to make a living the authors needed their plays to run multiple days. Playwrights were paid the profits from the third performance of a new play, so if the play did not last, the author lost his or her profits. Basically, it was in the playwright’s best interests to write to the strengths of the company.

In addition to taking into account the creative talents of the actors when writing a dramatic piece, it is also important to consider the overall production environment of the time. An author writing for a specific company was not a new concept, but the time off from officially sanctioned performances had altered the English theatre scene. For example, during the Interregnum a number of people in the theatre business had aged out of their roles, moved on to other prospects, or died. The addition of females on the stage had many advantages, but because of previous restrictions it also meant that there were few trained female actors. There were women who had acted in private theatres in social settings, but many of them were of high stature and were not willing to sully themselves or their families by acting for profit. Despite the notoriety and benefits that some actresses would receive, the profession was not seen in a positive light.37

The theatre system of the period was very demanding upon leading actors and actresses. During the season they frequently performed six days a week, save Sunday and holidays, with roughly two hundred performances a year. There were occasionally breaks in production by

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royal decree, sometimes for a death in the royal family or for displeasure with a play. Charles II shut down *The Change of Crownes* in April of 1667 because he found the play to be offensive to the Royal Court, and to resume acting (with a different show) the company had to obtain the King’s permission. A sixteenth month closure occurred starting in 1665 due to an outbreak of the bubonic plague. These stoppages were exceptions and theatre performances were a regular, nearly everyday occurrence.

The theatre operated in a repertory system and their turnover of material was remarkable. It was not unusual for one company to perform multiple plays in a single week. Additionally, their repertories were constantly growing. At many points, troupes were not merely performing the same few plays over and over, certainly there were favorites that got multiple productions, but new plays were being produced and learned by the actors. With performances most afternoons and occasional evening performances at court, there was little time for actors to learn their parts. It has been remarked upon in contemporary accounts that actors did not have perfect retention of their lines. In a diary entry on February 6, 1668, Samuel Pepys noted that while at a performance of *She Would if she Could*, he overheard the playwright Sir George Etherege comment that he did “mightily find fault with the actors, that they were out of humour, and had not their parts perfect.” However, given the actors’ working environment, their failings are not too surprising. This difficulty in adequately being able to prepare a part made character types almost a necessity for the theatre troupe and the audience. The troupe so a character could be constructed and performed to fit into the story of the play, and so that the audience could

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39 Pepys 159.
understand the general idea of what was happening if the play was performed under less than ideal circumstances.

Before the production of a new play actors were read the script first, frequently by the author. In *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber*, Cibber recalls playwrights John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee reading their plays to the actors with varying effects.\(^4^0\) The plays only received a few weeks preparation and this time included the actor initially hearing the play and learning lines, all in the midst of their production schedule and keeping up with the current roster of plays. Rehearsals are generally thought to have taken place in the morning before the day’s performance, but they were also known to have rehearsals after performances. Pepys makes reference to just such a rehearsal when he comments on a request from a friend that was an actress in The King’s Company. After seeing a performance of *The Humerous Lieutenant*, “[Elizabeth] Knipp made us stay in a box and see the dancing preparatory to to-morrow for ‘The Goblins,’ a play of [Sir John] Suckling’s, not acted these twenty-five years.”\(^4^1\) On another occasion, he is also witness to backstage talk after a performance where there is company business.\(^4^2\) In other words, in addition to a morning rehearsal, and an afternoon performance, the actors could also have theatre duties in the evenings.

The repertory system employed during the period created quite a demand on actors, and playwrights were not the only ones to notice when dialogue was mangled or forgotten. This seems to have been particularly true of plays that were new to a company’s repertory. In reference to *Romeo and Juliet*, Pepys commented that “I am resolved to go no more to see the


\(^{41}\) Pepys 88.

\(^{42}\) Pepys 158.
first time of acting, for they were all of them out more or less.”  

This gives an idea of the quality that was seen in the beginning of “new” productions. While *Romeo and Juliet* was not a new play, it was newly staged by the Duke’s Company. Pepys’ comments do not appear to be a reaction to just one production, but a final frustration at seeing multiple productions that were lacking on their first performance. His remarks are also not meant as a negative statement on acting or performance from the era in general. Though Pepys frequently comments on bad acting, it is not an issue of the actors being uniformly bad, but likely rushed in their preparation. He mentions the improvement of acting with the benefit of multiple performances when speaking of *Sir Martin Mar-all or The Feigned Innocence*: “I do clearly see that they do improve in their acting of it.”  

He makes this comment after he has seen many performances of the show. Additionally, Pepys regularly went to productions multiple times, likely in an attempt to see that same kind of improvement.

The limited amount of time available to prepare a production was not the only factor that could lead to confusion within a performance. The audience themselves proved to be an enormous distraction to those that were trying to follow the plays. In an October 5, 1667 entry of his diary, Pepys recalls going backstage during a performance and there being numerous other people with no connection to the company being backstage as well. That entry, as well as regulations that were made, gives an indication as to how frequently the actors were interfered with, even during performances.

An agreement between the feuding actors and manager Thomas Killigrew was signed in December of 1675 that dealt with disturbance issues. The eleventh and twelfth articles (out of 43 Pepys 74.

44 Pepys 154.
thirteen) dealt with audience interference. The eleventh addressed having people posted at the theatre to keep audience members from entering the backstage area. The twelfth article states “that no persons unconcerned in the business of the play be admitted to stand between scenes.”\(^{45}\) This was not the first time that there was an attempt to curb audience interference. A bill from the Lord Chamberlain dealing with similar issues was posted on the playhouses in February of 1673. The bill ordered that people that had no company business were not allowed to go backstage and “our will and command is that no person of what quality soever presume to stand or sit on the stage, or to come within any part of the scenes, before the play begins, while ‘tis acting, or after ‘tis ended.”\(^{46}\) A similar bill from the Lord Chamberlain was again posted in March of 1708.\(^ {47}\) What can be taken from this is that audience interference was a continual problem throughout the era. It was a big enough issue that multiple ordinances were written to deal with the problem and because the issue was readdressed we can also surmise that the regulations were not particularly effective or the issue would not need to be revisited on multiple occasions.

Along with audience members making their way backstage and on stage, theatre companies also had to deal with comments from the crowd during their performances. If the audience did not like an aspect of a play, they did not hesitate to tell the actors and everyone else in attendance. In his diary, Pepys makes several mentions of vocal audience members. Sir Charles Sedley regularly offered running negative commentaries, “he did at every line take


\(^{46}\) Lord Chamberlain’s Office, “Printed Bill on Entry to Playhouses, 2 February 1673,” 180.

\(^{47}\) Lord Chamberlain’s Office, “Printed Bill. Audience Forbidden to Come on Stage, 2 March 1708,” 180.
notice of the dullness of the poet and badness of the action.”48 At times Pepys found the audience far more entertaining than the plays, but that was often due to the fact that he was unable to hear the actors. Sir Sedley again provides an example of this common playhouse occurrence. Pepys recalled being “vexed all the while with two talking ladies and Sir Charles Sedley” while attempting to watch *The Maid’s Tragedy* and eventually “lost the pleasure of the play wholly.”49 This illustrates the raucous crowds and how it could be difficult to hear and see all of a play with part of the audience drawing attention. The multiple disturbances made recognizable character types of great use during the period because there was a strong chance that between the under-rehearsed acting, the imperfectly memorized dialogue, and the noisy audience, a play could be difficult to follow.

Particularly in terms of comedies, if the accuracy and delivery of lines could not be counted on, it was useful if the audience could identify character types so that they could follow the story even with a less than perfect performance. With the use of types there was often typecasting. Certain actors played similar roles within a genre and audiences would associate that actor with certain characters. Many leading actors of the time were in both tragedies and comedies and within each genre they tended to play the same kinds of parts. Some actors could play any role and did, but most excelled in a particular area and that area would be thoroughly mined. Not only were the same actors frequently cast for the same type of roles, but seeing the success of parts matched with specific performers, playwrights often wrote parts for actors and utilized the same character types again and again.

If an actor did something well and it was a success, why not do something similar again. Character types were practically a necessity for Restoration theatre to function. The nearly

48 Pepys 175.

49 Pepys 271.
constant production of different plays, the shortage of rehearsal time, and the disruptive crowds, made the use of types a common element of the period’s comedies. Typing not only gave playwrights a successful and proven template to follow, but it also gave the actor a recognizable and known character that could be embodied in a short amount of time. Additionally, with the use of types the audience had an idea of what reaction a typed character was trying to evoke even if a performance was lacking or the dialogue was not accurately delivered by an actor.

With some of the dense plotlines and dialog present in many Restoration comedies, it seems especially useful for types to be easily identified when it was unusual not to have disturbances during performances. In manners comedy two of the most prevalent and popular character types were the truewit and the country bumpkin. Various elements of the truewit had been around before, but the elements of the type came together and flourished during the period. A pre-Restoration model of this type is found in Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene: Or, the Silent Woman*, a play that was popular in the first years of the Restoration when repertories were bare and new plays were scarce. One of the key male characters of the piece is fittingly named Truewit. In the case of the character and the type, the truewit is naturally quick witted. There is often much deceit and artifice in the type’s actions and words, but there is also always intelligence and humor.

William Congreve’s *The Way of the World* provides prime examples of the truewit and country bumpkin, types that were in part formed by years of theatrical tradition and at the same time forged out of the realities of contemporary society. This play is used as a case study and supplies a sample of the two types and their development in England, which is used to provide a baseline for the types’ development in America.
Written in 1700, *The Way of the World* is reminiscent of the earlier plays of the period, but is more in line with the increasingly moral conservatism of turn of the century England. The beginning of the Restoration is marked by truewits with an overwhelming desire: a desire for women, money, clothes, position, or whatever the world had to offer. A certain desire still remains throughout the span of the type, but as the Restoration era moves forward, there is an evident moral shift in the plays and in society. The first years of the Restoration were a reaction to a break from the puritanical rule of Oliver Cromwell and the return of the monarchy in the person of Charles II, a ruler who liked to indulge in pleasure. The fact that attitudes became less lavish in the protestant country as time moved forward not surprising. Attacks on the stage, most notably by Jeremy Collier,\(^5\) definitely played a role in dampening the exploits of Restoration comic characters, but the adjustment in tone was also a reflection of a society that was further away from the repression of the Commonwealth period. *The Way of the World* provides an example of a play that has been affected by the changing mood in England, but it still contains the scheming character types and the oblivious character types, with the lascivious truewit slightly reformed. This trend of more moral plots and behavior would continue and these types would influence theatre and grow in the American colonies.

Like most manners plays, *The Way of the World* is built around a romantic relationship. In this situation Mirabell is trying to win approval to marry Millamant. As is the case with many plays of the period, though the most basic element of the play is quite simple and straightforward, there are multiple complications that make the overall story rather dense. Half of Millamant’s dowry is controlled by her aunt, Lady Wishfort and she will not give her consent because Mirabell once feigned affection for the aunt while trying to woo Millamant. Mirabell

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\(^5\) Collier’s *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) sent a ripple through society that would influence theatre legislation in England and America into the twentieth century.
must cleverly scheme to get Lady Wishfort to agree to the match, but that is not all. He also has to outsmart others with plans of their own to obtain Millamant’s fortune. Naturally, as he is a truewit, Mirabell does outmaneuver his opposition and gets what he wants.

The only other character that matches Mirabell’s wit is his prospective mate, Millamant. She is as witty, clever, and well versed in the ways of society like Mirabell, but because of her gender she does not hold the same advantage that Mirabell does. She can scheme and manipulate to a certain extent, but ultimately the men in Restoration society hold the power. During this period in England, women were basically chattel whose futures were determined by men. It is perhaps because of this oppressive milieu that female wits in Restoration plays (of which Millamant is the quintessence) are equal or superior in wit to their male counterparts. They have to be incredibly clever to achieve anything while operating in a system where they are lacking power.

Another key component in the play’s intrigue comes in the person of Sir Wilfull Witwoud. As he is a country bumpkin, Sir Wilfull is not orchestrating the manipulations, but is an obstacle and sometimes pawn in the machinations. His honesty and naivete make him the frequent butt of jokes and an easy target for manipulation. Sir Wilfull is Lady Wishfort’s nephew from the country who is intended to be Millamant’s marriage match. Millamant and Mirabell are of course against this idea and Sir Wilfull is not particularly keen on it either. During the course of the play he is a temporary problem to Millamant and Mirabell’s marriage prospects, but eventually is part of Mirabell’s scheme to win Millamant.

Mirabell’s verbal wit is apparent throughout the play in his dialogue with those lacking wit and those who are also clever. His easy dominance over those lacking in wit can be seen in a quick exchange with Witwoud, the half-brother of Sir Wilfull:
MIRABELL: A fool, and your brother, Witwoud?

WITWOUD: Ay, ay, my half-brother. My half-brother he is, no nearer, upon honour.

MIRABELL: Then 'tis possible he may be but half a fool.

WITWOUD: Good, good, Mirabell, le drôle! Good, good, hang him, don't let's talk of him. (pg. 765; act 1) 51

Mirabell takes a jab at Witwoud, but with his charm manages to do so without causing offense. Mirabell does not need to spend much time or many words dispensing with Witwoud because the fool does not have the same level of wit to challenge or engage Mirabell. Witwoud and all fools, are merely playthings or pawns bandied about in exchanges with the truewit and they are ignored or discarded when the truewit loses interest or achieves his goal.

Outwitting fools is hardly enough to display a character’s superior wit; the truewit must also impress when interacting with other clever characters. The best verbal match for Mirabell comes from Millamant. Over the course of the play, the two have many discussions where they both put their wit on display. The following extract presents Mirabell at an advantage:

MILLAMANT: One no more owes one's beauty to a lover than one's wit to an echo. They can but reflect what we look and say: vain empty things if we are silent or unseen, and want a being.

MIRABELL: Yet, to those two vain empty things, you owe two the greatest pleasures of your life.

MILLAMANT: How so?

MIRABELL: To your lover you owe the pleasure of hearing yourselves

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praised, and to an echo the pleasure of hearing yourselves talk.

(pg. 776; act 2)

It is important to note that Mirabell and truewits in general do not win people over by offering constant praise and compliments, but by impressing them with their charms and wordplay, even if their words are not entirely flattering.

Mirabell’s wit is not just obvious to the audience of *The Way of the World*; the other characters in the play also appreciate it. Despite their nearly constant bickering or perhaps because of their clever interchanges, Millamant declares that “I love him violently” (pg. 794; act 4), when speaking of Mirabell. Foible, Lady Wishfort’s servant, also refers to Mirabell as being a “sweet winning gentleman” (pg. 782; act 3). While some just simply state their fondness of Mirabell and his cleverness, what is of even more interest are the characters that have legitimate reasons to dislike Mirabell or proclaim their distaste all while proving their underlying affection for the truewit. In a conversation, Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall (Mirabell’s former lover) proclaim that they both hate Mirabell, but that is only the emotion that they want to display:

MRS. FAINALL: You change color.

MRS. MARWOOD: Because I hate him.

MRS. FAINALL: So do I, but I can hear him named. But what reason have you to hate him in particular?

MRS. MARWOOD: I never loved him; he is, and always was, insufferably proud.

MRS. FAINALL: By the reason you give for your aversion, one would think it dissembled; for you have laid a fault to his charge, of which his enemies must acquit him.
MRS. MARWOOD: Oh, then it seems you are one of his favorable enemies.

Methinks you look a little pale, and now you flush again. (pg. 771; act 2)

If that dialog alone is not enough to illustrate the women’s true feelings, Fainall, Mrs. Fainall’s husband and Mrs. Marwood’s lover, states it outright, “to let you know I see through all your little arts. Come, you both love him, and both have equally dissembled your aversion. Your mutual jealousies of one another have made you clash till you have both struck fire. I have seen the warm confession reddening on your cheeks, and sparkling from your eyes” (pg. 772; act 2).

Mrs. Marwood’s deeds also go to show her true feelings as she was the person who revealed Mirabell’s scheme of fooling Lady Wishfort with false affection while pursuing Millamant. Mrs. Marwood claims she did this out of friendship for Lady Wishfort, but it is clear that she was jealous of Mirabell’s feelings for Millamant and Mrs. Marwood’s reveal makes Mirabell’s plan to marry Millamant much more difficult.

If there is anyone with motive to dislike Mirabell, it is Mrs. Fainall. Through their past broken relationship, Mrs. Fainall has been put in a difficult situation, yet she still shows an appreciation for Mirabell. She exhibits loyalty to him by helping him with his various schemes. When Mirabell requests Mrs. Fainall to “draw off Witwoud” so that he can have a more private conversation with Millamant she responds, “immediately” (pg. 776; act 2). A small task, but considering that she is helping him to marry someone else and that conversing with Witwoud is a supreme annoyance, the gesture conveys a definite affinity for Mirabell. It should also be noted that Mrs. Fainall is somewhat bound to Mirabell. Before she was remarried, she signed over control of her estate to Mirabell, rather than trusting it to Fainall (a fact that Fainall is unaware of). This could explain why she is willing to do what Mirabell asks, because her financial assets are in his control, but it must also be taken into account that she trusted Mirabell in the first
place. Despite the fact that Mirabell endangered her social wellbeing and then instead of taking personal responsibility, he pawned her off on someone else, Mrs. Fainall still has faith in Mirabell. That is a prime example of the powers of the truewit.

Lady Wishfort’s animosity to Mirabell is evident through nearly all of the play. She refers to him as a “wheedling villain” (pg. 779; act 35) and a “traitor” (pg. 804; act 4) because he led her on when he was trying to get closer to Millamant. While she has claimed to hate him, Lady Wishfort makes a statement near the play’s end that reveals her true feelings: “oh, he has witchcraft in his eyes and tongue. When I did not see him, I could have bribed a villain to his assassination, but his appearance rakes the embers which have so long lain smothered in my breast” (pg. 806; act 5). The presence of Mirabell’s charm and the display of his wit shows that Lady Wishfort is still captivated by the truewit.

While Mirabell’s wit and charms are featured in the play, another key element of a truewit character is his flaws. A truewit, in this case Mirabell, is not a perfect hero. The truewit has flaws and is self-aware enough to be conscious of those faults. Mirabell is not an absolute gentleman. He presents himself well and his wit covers for some ungallant behavior. Mirabell is guilty of at least two fairly large indiscretions prior to the action in the play. As noted previously, Mirabell pretended to have a romantic interest in Lady Wishfort as a means to get close to Millamant. It could be argued that at age fifty-five, Lady Wishfort should have known better than to think that Mirabell was a real suitor and perhaps Mirabell was just trying to please Lady Wishfort by showing her some attention. Regardless of Lady Wishfort’s lack of sense or Mirabell’s intentions, Lady Wishfort was hurt by the episode and in turn Mirabell’s prospect of marrying Millamant was again made more difficult.
By a play’s end the truewit generally emerges victorious, but the journey will not have been without obstacles, obstacles that are frequently of the truewit’s own making. There are consequences to a truewit’s actions, and for Mirabell prior misdeeds must be addressed to achieve his goal of marrying Millamant and attaining her fortune. His misuse of Lady Wishfort has already undermined his goal, but another transgression from his past has consequences for many within his society. In his affair with Mrs. Fainall, there was evidently a pregnancy scare and Mirabell’s reaction was somewhere in-between cad and gentleman. He was mindful of her reputation, as an out of wedlock child would be far more damaging to her, but not mindful enough to marry her himself. Instead of making the commitment, Mirabell arranges for her to marry Mr. Fainall. Mirabell has saved Mrs. Fainall’s reputation, but he has also entered her into an abysmal union. Not only has he given Mrs. Fainall an unpleasant match, but also if his deception is discovered it will bring problems to a multitude of people in his circle, Mirabell included. The truewit’s merits always outnumber his faults, but part of what makes him so interesting is that he is not a perfect hero, but a character with flaws. Without those flaws, there would not be as many opportunities to make use of the abundance of wit that the type possesses. The majority of the characters that surround the truewit are hypocritical and oblivious to themselves and their surroundings. The truewit stands apart because he is self-aware, and attuned to those around him.

Despite the truewit’s faults or any circumstances that the type gets involved with, the truewit will eventually prevail. By the close of The Way of the World, Mirabell manages to save the finances and reputations of the two women he had previously wronged, Mrs. Fainall and Lady Wishfort. However, saving two others is merely a bonus as Mirabell also wins Millamant and her considerable fortune. The primary element to take from this outcome is that Mirabell got
what he wanted. In the case of this particular truewit others were helped. That is not because it is the function of the truewit to save all of the characters. While this is frequently the case, it is only a matter of the truewit’s desired outcome. Perhaps Mirabell wanted to atone for former misdeeds, but to achieve his ultimate goal of marrying Millamant with her fortune fully intact, it was necessary for him to rectify his past actions.

When Lady Wishfort is threatened by Fainall, Mirabell knows that she is desperate and that he has the opportunity to secure his future. Lady Wishfort states, “I'll forgive all that's past. Nay, I'll consent to anything to come, to be delivered from this tyranny” (pg. 806; act 5). Mirabell responds that even without the match to Millamant he is “resolved” to help (pg. 806; act 5). That seems rather gallant, but Lady Wishfort’s predicament is largely due to his maneuvering and Mirabell knows that if he saves Lady Wishfort she will be beholden to him. Mirabell is awarded his assurance immediately with Lady Wishfort offering that “you shall have my niece yet, and all her fortune, if you can but save me from this imminent danger” (pg. 806; act 5). Clearly Mirabell is more interested in Lady Wishfort’s promise than in a pure dedication to chivalry. After her initial vow to grant Millamant to Mirabell, he reconfirms her promise before he reveals that he has a document that can defeat Fainall’s plans:

MIRABELL: Madam, you remember your promise?

LADY WISHFORT: Aye, dear sir, (pg. 807; act 5)

Before Mirabell shares the meaning of the document, he again asks Lady Wishfort, “Madam, your promise” (pg. 808; act 5). When she agrees yet again, only then does Mirabell disclose that he holds Mrs. Fainall’s estate in trust and that her husband has no power to destroy Lady Wishfort or her family. Mirabell gets what he wants and it is good fortune that it coincides with other characters being aided as well.
The truewit cannot just do anything to achieve a desired outcome. One of the fundamental characteristics of a truewit is operating within the rules of society. The truewit is not seeking to change the system, but to master the system. What matters in many manners plays, *The Way of the World* included, is appearances. There is much maneuvering within society, but it must all be done while maintaining one’s reputation. Much of the action within manners plays deals with characters trying to keep up appearances while still pursuing their desires. Mirabell sums up the relationship between appearance and society quite succinctly: “why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions? To save that idol, reputation” (pg. 774; act 2). Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall’s prior relationship and her subsequent marriage provide a lens to examine the importance of reputation. When Mrs. Fainall inquires of Mirabell, “why did you make me marry this man,” (pg. 774; act 2) his response illustrates the façade of society:

I knew Fainall to be a man lavish of his morals, an interested and professing friend, a false and a designing lover, yet one whose wit and outward fair behavior have gained a reputation with the Town, enough to make that woman stand excused who has suffered herself to be won by his addresses. A better man ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion; a worse had not answered to the purpose.

(pg. 774; act 2)

In other words, Fainall may make a bad husband, but the image of him as a husband is valuable. In the truewit’s society, appearances come before substance.

Keeping one’s place in society is not just limited to concealing truths as reputations can also be shaken on false accusations. Lady Wishfort is willing to give up control of her fortune as
well as Millamant’s, to protect her reputation even without knowing if the accusations of Fainall are true. Members of the societies in manners plays are trying to engineer things to their advantage, but they do not all possess the skills of the truewit. One of the main aspects of the play is to point out the difference between natural wit, which the truewit possesses, and false wit. Mirabell states “where modesty’s ill manners, ‘tis but fit/ that impudence and malice pass for wit” (pg. 770; act 1). Characters who are lacking in wit attempt the same sort of schemes as Mirabell, but as they are not truewits their success rates are not nearly as high.

While the truewit is marked by his cleverness and ability to maneuver within society, the country bumpkin is marked by his lack of wit and as an outsider to the society featured in manners plays. To the society, much of what country bumpkin Sir Wilfull does and says is deemed foolish and the characters are free with their insults. Upon discovering that Sir Wilfull plans on taking his European tour at a more advanced age than most London gentleman, Mirabell and Fainall make reference to him as a “blockhead” (pg. 764; act 1) and a “fool” (pg. 764; act 1). Fainall goes on to describe Sir Wilfull as “an odd mixture of bashfulness and obstinacy” (pg. 764; act 1). Witwoud also refers to his half-brother as a fool on more than one occasion as does Millamant.

Much of the judgement that is leveled against Sir Wilfull is because he is an outsider to their society. He is judged by their rules even though he is not wholly aware of those rules. When he first arrives at Lady Wishfort’s, Petulant and Witwoud waste no time in making fun of Sir Wilfull’s appearance and speech. Sir Wilfull is not attired in elaborate garments and accouterment; rather he is wearing a practical riding outfit and dirty boots from his travel into the city. Also a target of the foppish duo is Sir Wilfull’s habit of repeatedly saying “no offense.” Sir Wilfull’s dirty boots cause even more of an uproar when he tries to remove them much to Lady
Wishfort’s displeasure, “Fie, fie, Nephew, you would not pull off your boots here. Go down into the hall. Dinner shall stay for you. - My nephew's a little unbred; you'll pardon him” (pg. 788; act 3). Sir Wilfull has not done anything heinous, but his actions clearly differentiate him as an outsider and because he does not follow societal mores he is disparaged.

There is a definite element of town versus country in the treatment of country bumpkins in manners plays. Millamant states, “I loathe the country and everything that relates to it” (pg. 792; act 4). Her statement is a bit of an exaggeration, she also claims to not like the city either though she clearly prefers it to the country, but it gives a window into a common opinion, an opinion that is still prevalent. City dwellers often think they are more sophisticated and well mannered than those that hail from the country. This concept is borne out in manners plays through the centuries and is definitely a factor in The Way of the World.

While the country bumpkin is shown as being foolish, he is not the ultimate fool. In comparison to other foolish characters, the type has many positive attributes. Country bumpkin characters that Lady Wishfort might describe as being “unbred” can also be explained through the type’s fundamental character traits of honesty and naivete. Much of what the societal characters take offense to from the type is the country bumpkin’s habit of stating the truth. There is a lack of a filter with country bumpkins and they state what they think. They are not fettered by society’s rules of decorum.

In manners plays, country bumpkins often serve to point out what is obvious to everyone, but that no one else is willing to mention. It is not that country bumpkins are more keenly observant than all other characters, it is that they are oblivious to the restraints that hold others back. Through the course of the play, it has been made abundantly clear that the elderly Lady
Wishfort dresses and acts ridiculously younger than her age. While others joke and gossip about her appearance amongst themselves, Sir Wilfull thinks nothing of commenting on her overdone makeup while in the presence of many, including Lady Wishfort and observes, “hearkee, she dare not frown desperately, because her face is none of her own. ‘Sheart, an she should, her forehead would wrinkle like the coat of a cream cheese” (pg. 805; act 5). Sir Wilfull also takes aim at the behavior of his brother. In the following remarks, he is offended that Witwoud is more concerned with appearances than with welcoming his relative: “sheart, sir, but there is, and much offence. A pox, is this your inns o' court breeding, not to know your friends and your relations, your elders, and your betters?” (pg. 787; act 3). Witwoud responds that it is “not modish to know relations in Town,” (pg. 787; act 3) but this does not appease Sir Wilfull. As his name would suggest, Witwoud is lacking in wit and Sir Wilfull points out that his brother is a fop. While the country bumpkin is not well versed in societal customs so does not obey them, the fop exaggerates everything and makes a fool of himself. Mirabell, Millamant, and all the characters with wit are well aware of Witwoud’s foppery and are annoyed by his foolish behavior, but they stop short of directly calling him a fop to his face. The country bumpkin can sometimes cause offense by lacking tact and acting outside of society’s conventions, but the type is dependable. Sir Wilfull comments that “if I say’t, I’ll do’t” (pg. 788; act 3). The character is not just honest in his opinions of others; his words can be counted on.

A country bumpkin is still prone to foolish behavior, but there is usually more behind it than the character simply being a fool. In The Way of the World, most of Sir Wilfull’s more egregious behavior is the result of him being an easy target. When Sir Wilfull unknowingly gets in the way of Fainall’s plan, Fainall is not terribly concerned and comments that he will “manage

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52 While 55 is not old by modern standards, during the Restoration period it would have qualified as an advanced age. Elisabeth Mignon, Crabbed Age And Youth: The Old Men And Women In The Restoration Comedy Of Manners (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1947).
him” (pg. 789; act 3). Fainall’s management simply involves getting Sir Wilfull drunk and it is in that state that Sir Wilfull is most bothersome. However, even though his drunkenness makes him even more socially inept, Sir Wilfull still maintains the honest attributes of the country bumpkin.

While the country bumpkin has more sense than many fools do, the type does not approach the level of the wits. The country bumpkin is not known for verbal acumen and Sir Wilfull is sorely outmatched in conversation with Mirabell or Millamant. Millamant has been quoting poet John Suckling, but Sir Wilfull does not realize this so when she says “natural, easy suckling,” he takes offense and responds that he is “no such suckling neither, cousin, nor stripling” (pg. 791; act 4). He does not understand the literary reference, but this exchange also serves to point out another important aspect of the country bumpkin. Sir Wilfull and the type in general, take things at face value. When Millamant expresses her annoyance with his want of comprehension and his response, Sir Wilfull’s reply of “I must answer in plain English,” epitomizes country bumpkin behavior (pg. 791; act 4). He does not search for deeper meaning or engage in clever word play, he takes things literally and communicates simply. On the other hand, Mirabell not only recognizes Millamant’s references, but he finishes her quotes. While this could be attributed to the content of the two men’s education, it has more to do with the country bumpkin’s inability to pick up on verbal and social cues and the truewit’s mastery of those skills.

Country bumpkins provide a contrast to truewits, and in general show the artifice of the world that the truewits operate in. The type is in a unique position as they are outsiders to the truewit’s coterie, but through the course of the play get a glimpse inside that normally closed
society. While country bumpkins are ridiculed for their honesty, lack of social manners, and naivete, they also serve to highlight the negative aspects of the truewit’s society.

The country bumpkin is shown as having more worth than the other fools, yet he is definitely put in a class below the truewits. Sir Wilfull is shown in a somewhat favorable light, but Congreve points out the character’s social deficiencies throughout, particularly through Millamant. The fact that Millamant is one of the cleverest people in the play further highlights the country bumpkin’s failings. Because of her superior wit, her opinion within the play matters and she frequently finds Sir Wilfull to be a fool. During the Restoration period, the country bumpkin is chiefly portrayed as a positive figure and often ends the play unscathed, but he does not end up with the female wit. The type can be helpful, but not the ultimate hero of the play.

Mirabell uses his verbal skills to show his superior breeding and that he is above the foolish characters. Mirabell and truewits in general use these skills to master whatever situation they are involved in. On the other hand, fools behave unwisely and act outside the established rules of the truewit’s society. What differentiates the truewit is the ability to manipulate things to his advantage all while playing by the rules of society. The truewit is the perpetrator of an inside job, while the country bumpkin is always on the outside of the society being featured and is unable to navigate the labyrinthine tenets of that society.

*The Way of the World* is a perfect example of a play with a complicated plotline containing easily identifiable types including prime examples of the truewit and the country bumpkin. When theatre troupes ventured to America to entertain the colonists, the character types traveled with them. The types that appeared on the early American stage, like the Jonathan character, were not entirely original and had their roots in the manners plays that flourished in
England. Eighteenth century America was a place of rapid change and development and country bumpkin and truewit character types were not immune to that dynamic environment.

Versions of the country bumpkin type appear in America frequently as the Jonathan or Yankee character. In Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast*, Jonathan is naïve to city customs, but is proud and clever in his own way. Like many characters that develop after Jonathan, he is also very patriotic and serves as a sort of symbol of America. Despite the American flourishes, Jonathan shares many traits with the country bumpkin types like Sir Wilfull. *The Contrast* as a whole is clearly based on the English manners style that had proved to be quite popular in America. Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s manners play *The School for Scandal* (1777) is even featured in *The Contrast*. While Sheridan’s play is the most obvious influence on *The Contrast* and its characters, there was a significant history of English manners plays in America that led up to Tyler’s drama.

In addition to Restoration theatre, the Jonathan character was also shaped by cultural influences. The idea of Jonathan already existed before he was put on stage. There is no definitive timeline or an exact origin for Jonathan, rather he was a folk character that was present in the consciousness of many Americans. There are plenty of theories of how the character came to be, but none of them have any substantial or unassailable proof. What is known is that Jonathan, in part, stemmed out of the general concept of a Yankee or a patriotic minded New Englander.

Before Jonathan ever appeared on the stage, he was mentioned in the media. Jonathan would have a long run appearing in political cartoons and he is referenced in an English political cartoon in 1776.\(^{53}\) Jonathan is also mentioned in a London newspaper article purporting to be

the journal of a man who was taken prisoner by the Americans while attempting to deliver
supplies during the Revolution. He claims to have observed a “Brother Jonathan, with his pick
axe and hoe, crying out ‘you see what we Americans can do, you may as soon pull the stars from
the skies, as subdue us free-born Americans by force of arms.’”54 It does not particularly matter
if the account from the Post is true, what the article illustrates is that the English were aware of
the Jonathan figure by at least 1776. If the English were aware of the type by this time, it is
likely that Jonathan was present in the American colonies at an even earlier date. In 1769 a
politically minded letter credited to “David Homespun (a son of liberty)”55 mentioning Jonathan
was printed in the Connecticut Journal. At this point the Jonathan character was at its early
stages in American history and would morph into a popular figure in various forms of
entertainment. The bulk of the character’s fame and appearances occurred in the first half of the
nineteenth century. Jonathan was likely influenced by the folk character Yankee Doodle who
predated Jonathan and was present in songs, cartoons, and farces among other things. Though
Yankee Doodle had an impact on the forming of Jonathan, it is important to know that not every
Yankee is a Jonathan.56 Jonathan was a more fully formed character especially in terms of
theatre.

The Jonathan character existed and thrived in many mediums and while they are all
connected, the version that appeared in The Contrast had differences from the character that

56 For a more in depth look at Jonathan’s development from Yankee to Uncle Sam and to see the character in other
mediums, see Winifred Morgan, An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity (Newark: University
appeared in cartoons and in farcical afterpieces.\textsuperscript{57} While even in \textit{The Contrast} Jonathan is a typed character, he has more depth than characters in farces that by their very nature are broader. Who was using Yankee characters was also a factor in how they were characterized. Yankee characters were not always positive. The term and the type was known and used by the British, and some of their uses were derogatory. This less than sympathetic use of the character was also true of English sympathizers in the American colonies. The character Jonathan was symbolic of America and the ordinary man and despite some of the negative character traits often associated with country bumpkins, \textit{The Contrast} was also able to showcase the character’s positive attributes, attributes that would be embraced by much of the American public.

While English plays held the boards in America from colonies to nationhood, there was dramatic literature that emerged from the colonies, though much of it was in the form of religious and political dialogs. Works that were more dramatic in nature were intended more for reading than for performance. When it came to plays actually being performed on a regular and somewhat professional basis, the repertory was decidedly English in origin. This is not surprising given that much of the population of the British colonies naturally considered themselves to be British. Perhaps the most obvious reason why English plays were so prevalent was because when professional acting troupes finally arrived in the colonies, they were from England.

With the arrival of professional companies, the frequency not only of English plays increased, but theatre in general expanded. Despite records of earlier theatre performances, it is not until the 1750s that professional troupes appear regularly on the American stage. In 1750 and 1751, bills in New York newspapers advertise benefits for Walter Murray, Thomas Kean, and various members of the Murray-Kean Company. An advertisement in *The Virginia Gazette* seeking subscribers to fund a theatre, also links the group to Williamsburg. Listings for benefit performances appear again in 1752, this time under the management of Robert Upton with many of the same players that appeared the previous year. One of the advertisements would suggest that the venture was not going terribly well as “Mr. Upton (to his great disappointment) not meeting with encouragement enough to support the Company for the season, intends to shorten
it, by performing 5 or 6 plays only”58 [see fig. 1].59 What is more interesting about Upton, is that he marks the looming arrival of the Hallam’s London Company of Comedians.60

The year 1752 was also marked by the arrival of the Hallam Company as an advertisement in *The Virginia Gazette* states their presence in Williamsburg, and their upcoming season in September.61 According to an October 1753 article in *The New-York Mercury*, William Hallam sent Upton out to “obtain permission to perform, erect a building, and settle everything,” before the group arrived.62 While this article is certainly interesting because it sheds light on Upton’s presence and deceit, it also establishes the arrival of the Hallam Company in New York from Virginia. The Hallams are being stressed because their presence noticeably changes theatre in the colonies. One does not know the quality of their performance, but in their various incarnations they were the most consistent theatrical presence in colonial America and they offered a rather large repertoire of plays to the public.

Up until the arrival of the English troupes, the bulk of theatre had been performed by amateur groups and was frequently academic in nature. Theatre was still not a welcome presence in many communities for both religious and economic reasons. The Pennsylvania Colony made many attempts to curtail theatrical activity and in 1700 passed an act that stated:

> whosoever shall introduce into this province and territories any rude or riotous sports, as prizes, stage-plays, masks, revels, bull-baitings, cock-fightings,

58 *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy* 01/13 1752: 3.

59 All figures appear at the end of the chapters

60 Over the years, the company went through member and name changes. The name was changed from the London Company to American Company and later to the Old American Company. Additionally, the troupe is sometimes referred to simply as the Hallam Company, or the Hallam-Douglass Company. Weldon B. Durham, ed., *American Theatre Companies, 1749-1887* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

61 *Virginia Gazette* 08/21 1752: 3.

bonfires, with such like, or shall practice the same, and be lawfully convict thereof, such person or persons shall, for every such offense, be reputed as breakers of the peace, and shall forfeit and pay twenty shillings, or suffer ten days’ imprisonment at hard labor in the House of Correction.63

Simple disputes between the colonies and England started early, as this law was repealed by the British government in 1705. This act and variants of it were repealed by England and reintroduced in Pennsylvania multiple times over the years.64

Massachusetts was particularly unfriendly to theatre and in 1750 passed a law to stop theatrical activity that would stay in place until the 1790s. Besides laws that banned putting on plays, there were also acts that were meant to discourage actors. Along with the common stigma of immorality that actors were frequently accused of (this was certainly not unique to the colonies and had long been the case in England as well) there was also a practical economic concern with actors. A travelling troupe would perform, charge for their performances, and then at some point move on to the next town. Colonial America had a shortage of physical currency so to have a community’s money leave town with the actors would be of difficulty to a local economy. In 1718 Connecticut set up laws against actors, or as they called them “beggars” and “vagabonds” that “set up and practice common plays.”65 Laws like this were not just colony wide, and sometimes towns would set up local regulations with prohibitions against acting.

Basically, any time not spent working to be productive or to serve could be seen as time wasted, and in the often harsh and challenging environ of the colonies, the “luxury” of theatre

63 *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania*, Vol. 2, Ch.2 Sec. 1, pg. 5.


was not a priority. Despite those negative feelings, theatre was still present. Educational settings were a fertile ground for theatre’s growth because drama was a teaching tool for learning rhetoric and oratory skills. There are records of students putting on shows, some more privately than others, and some with more acceptance than others. This is not something that was unique to one school, as there are records of multiple colleges having theatre performances. The students at the College of William and Mary’s productions of full plays were advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1736,66 and other schools put on plays as well, but what was even more common, and in many places more acceptable, were dialogues. Dialogues were not put under the same scrutiny as plays, and the dialogues were seen more as an academic exercise than just mere entertainment or a rebellious gathering. A common forum for such exercises was at university commencement ceremonies, where dialogues and odes were frequently performed.67

The spirit of theatre also lived, rather ironically in the sermons and writings of ministers who were often against theatrical endeavors. Despite those beliefs, there were many preachers who understood the power of drama, the ability to tell a story and to draw in a congregation, and to influence them. This was one of the reasons why churches denounced/feared theatre, and it was also the reason why many employed dramatic dialogs in their sermons, the ability to captivate and influence a malleable audience. An example of this kind of work can be found in the writings of one of the colonies’ most prolific ministers, Cotton Mather. Mather, who counted

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among his family some of New England’s most influential ministers, penned discourses meant to discourage his flock from sin. As the title implies, The Discourse of the Minister with James Morgan, on the way to his Execution, depicts the last moments of Morgan’s life and his discussion with a minister who is trying to save the murderer’s soul. Mather has another similar discourse with a minister trying to instruct the condemned Hugh Stone on how to achieve salvation, shortly before the criminal is to be put to death. Both discourses are intended to deliver a moral lesson, but to do so the pieces follow a clear dramatic structure. Even in an antitheatrical environment, the essence of theatre still lived in colonial America.

With the arrival of professional troupes, theatre did not exactly explode in the colonies, but even with constant challenges it grew steadily and began to influence the population. A manners play that proved popular prior to the escalating hostilities between the colonies and England, during the war, and after the Revolution, was George Farquhar’s The Beaux’ Stratagem (1707). Even during the contentious years, the play appealed to both loyalist and nationalist audiences and its consistent presence likely served as an influence on the nascent American drama.

From its first colonial performance in 1732, The Beaux’ Stratagem was consistently performed throughout the eighteenth century. There is evidence of it being staged in every

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decade of the century since its American arrival. There were two known productions of *The Beaux’ Stratagem* in the 1730s, with the first in 1732 (twenty years before the Hallam Company arrived in the colonies). An amateur group put on the latter in 1736 and this was likely true of the first production as well, although there is scant information on that performance. With the arrival of professional theatre companies in the 1750s, the frequency of the play’s performance increased as it was in the Hallam’s repertoire. It is also important to note that not only was the comedy a steady presence on the stage, but the play was also easily available in print. There are multiple advertisements that specifically list *The Beaux’ Stratagem* as being for sale. In addition to being frequently produced, it was produced in multiple locations. While it was performed many times in New York City, it also appeared in Albany, Virginia, Annapolis, Upper Marlborough Maryland, Charleston, Philadelphia, and in Connecticut. Even as tensions between England and the colonies grew, theatre continued, but the course of theatrical development and the development of America took a significant shift in 1774 as the Continental Congress suspended theatre in the colonies.

The Continental Congress was a group initially formed to respond to the Intolerable Acts, or as they were known in England the Restraining Acts or more commonly the Coercive Acts. Regardless of the nomenclature, the acts were punitive laws meant to regain control in Massachusetts, and the Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Association in response.

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71 “Williamsburg, September 10,” *Virginia Gazette* 09/10 1736: 4. The show was put on by “the young Gentlemen of the College,” in Williamsburg at William and Mary College.

72 *The Beaux’ Stratagem* was likely the company’s most popular comedy during the colonial period. Silverman, *A Cultural History Of The American Revolution*, 62-63.

73 Frequent ads for plays, including *The Beaux Stratagem* were particularly common in New York and Philadelphia newspapers.

The intent of the Articles was to counter the Parliament’s acts by setting up a boycott on British goods and theatre was very much a British product. Even just a quick perusal of production histories will show that the vast majority of plays being performed were British in origin and most of the people presenting theatre were also English. Theatre was a physical British commodity in the form of the plays and the troupes, but it was also an importation of English culture. It was not just a physical thing to be bought and sold; its Englishness had the ability to permeate society and influence and at the most basic level put Americans in a position where they were watching English society instead of spending their time being productive for America.75

The Articles of Association included provisions/directions for colonists to follow in order to be able to perform the boycott. It is here that the Continental Congress basically shut down professional theatre just prior to the Revolutionary War stating, “We will, in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry,… and will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments.”76 Theatre would still appear in some places, but at this time it was significantly diminished, not just because of the Congress’s directive, but also because of the reality of the current environment. The growing tensions between the two sides made the outbreak of war seem like an ever-increasing possibility and all of the elements resulted in economic hardships. Not


surprisingly, many theatre artists, a great deal of whom were English, left the colonies. Included in this group was the Hallam-Douglass Company, the primary touring troupe in America.77

Even with the pronouncements of Congress, the threat of war and the exodus of many performers, theatre continued, and included in those performances was The Beaux’ Stratagem. A smattering of amateur productions continued across the colonies, but the bulk of theatre performances during the Revolution came from the military. There is evidence of the American army participating in such theatrical endeavors, and even of George Washington’s presence at a performance.78 While stationed at Valley Forge, William Bradford wrote to his sister on May 14, 1778 and related theatrical activity in the camp reporting, “the Theatre is opened – Last Monday Cato was performed.”79 He goes on to mention other plays that are to be acted, but notes that the performances are dependent on the British Army’s next move, which could cause them to leave camp. It is not known if the other plays were ever performed by the soldiers, either at Valley Forge or somewhere else, but Cato was staged and there was intent for more theatre.

While there is no evidence of the Continental Army engaging in a full production schedule, there are clues that suggest that the activity was more prevalent than there is currently evidence to prove. The best example of this comes from motions from the Continental Congress. On Monday October 12, 1778:


78 As Washington was a known theatre lover, it is not terribly surprising that he should be present, except that as a member of the first Continental Congress, he signed the Articles of Association that banned theatre. Silverman, A Cultural History Of The American Revolution, 236.

it is hereby earnestly recommended to the several states, to take the most
effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, and for the suppressing of
theatrical entertainments, horse racing, gaming, and such other diversions as
are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles
and manners… all officers in the army of the United States, be, and hereby
are strictly enjoined to see that the good and wholesome rules provided for the
discountenancing of prophaneness and vice, and the preservation of morals
among the soldiers, are duly and punctually observed.  

October 16, 1778:

Whereas frequenting play houses and theatrical entertainments has a fatal
tendency to divert the minds of the people from a due attention to the means
necessary for the defense of their country, and the preservation of their
liberties… any person holding an office under the United States, who shall
act, promote, encourage or attend such plays, shall be deemed unworthy to
hold such office, and shall be accordingly dismissed.  

While all of these statements were not agreed on, what is of interest here is that the issue was
ever brought up for discussion. The fact that the possible negative effect of theatre on not only
the general population, but on the military in particular was a topic of importance suggests that

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the American army was involved in theatrical activity to the extent that it merited mention by Congress. 82

The Continental Army was not the only military force with theatre involvement. Unaffected by the Continental Congress’s pronouncements, the British military was heavily involved in theatrical production. It seems that wherever British troops were stationed, there was likely to be a play. 83 New York was England’s greatest stronghold in the colonies and as such had the most vibrant theatre life. While military theatre falls under the category of amateur theatre, the British theatre in New York had fairly regular seasons and sizable support. The plays were set up as charities to help assist widows, orphans, and unfortunates in general, but that seems more of an excuse to be able to produce theatre rather than the actual reason for the activities. A look at the theatre finances would suggest that the real interest was in the productions as that is where the majority of the money went, with the actual charity cases receiving significantly less than what was spent overall. 84

During their years in New York, the British military took over the John Street Theatre and renamed it the Theatre Royal. 85 In their regular repertoire was The Beaux’ Stratagem, which they produced on multiple occasions from 1778-1783. The players, made up mainly of English officers, 86 were performing for an audience that contained a great deal of their fellow military, but they played to New Yorkers as well. While many of the town’s current inhabitants were


83 For more on the British army and theatre see, Brown 22-44, 85-131.

84 New-York, theatre, 1782. General account of receipts and disbursements for the two last seasons. Gaine, Hugh, 1726 or 7-1807, printer, 1782.

85 Brown 30

86 It is known from various advertisements and an account book that actresses were also used in these performances, but their level of experience is not known.
loyalists, it is not unreasonable to imagine that many of the people who still found themselves in English occupied New York would fall in line with whoever was in charge out of a sense of self preservation.

The play’s popularity continued after the war as well and it was performed in Maryland, New York, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Even with the animus between the colonists and the English before, during, and after the Revolution, *The Beaux’ Stratagem* remained popular despite the fact that it was a distinctly English play. Analyzing the text and examining the character types provides possible reasons for *The Beaux’ Stratagem*’s enduring popularity with the American public despite their growing bitterness to all things English.

*The Beaux’ Stratagem* centers on two financially wrecked gentlemen from London who disguise themselves and go into the country to find wealth with the hopes that none of their city acquaintances will discover their financial woes. The plan is that to increase the appearance of their dwindling wealth, they will trade positions with one playing the other’s servant in each town they visit with the ultimate goal of ensnaring a wealthy heiress. During the course of the play, Archer acts as the servant to Aimwell. Both characters are wits, but Archer is the main character and truewit of the piece.

The two men are somewhat mysterious on their arrival, with some believing they are highwaymen. In fact, their innkeeper is involved with a gang of thieves who attempt to rob the gentlemen. An actual highwayman questions Archer in an attempt to get information about Aimwell, but Archer quite adeptly is able to outmaneuver his questioner with clever wordplay. Actually, Archer’s biggest failing is his inability to completely disguise his wit. He is so clever, that it is hard for others to believe him anything other than a gentleman and on multiple

87 George Farquhar was Irish, but the play was filled with English characters, set in England, and first produced in England.
occasions others question his position. In an exchange with the innkeeper’s daughter, she is suspicious of Archer stating “that your discourse and your habit are contradictions, and it would be nonsense in me to believe you a footman any longer” (pg. 39; 2.2).\(^8\) On another occasion, Mrs. Sullen also observes his wit and comments, “that flight was above the pitch of a livery” (pg. 60; 3.3). Dorinda also susses out that Archer is not a typical servant. Basically, his wit shines so bright that it cannot be well hidden.

The play’s country bumpkin type comes in the character Scrub, Mr. Sullen’s servant. When the truewit and country bumpkin types interact with each other the bumpkin is generally aware of his standing. The type sees the truewit as being of an elevated standing and as having superior wit. Archer poses as a servant and socializes with Scrub in that role, and although Scrub is unaware of Archer’s real identity, he still senses that Archer is superior to him stating, “he’s clear another sort of man than I” (pg. 45; 3.1). Upon discovering a plot Scrub comments “I must give room to my betters” (pg. 85; 4.1). The “better” that he goes to is Archer. Even though Archer is pretending to be of the same social class as Scrub, he is still filling the role of the truewit. Mrs. Sullen describes Archer in a way that applies to many a truewit, “the devil’s in this fellow. He fights, loves, and banter, all in a breath” (pg. 115; 5.3).

It is important to note that while country bumpkins find truewits to be mental superiors, bumpkins can still be clever. Scrub is able to determine that another one of the characters is a liar. He does not know the full extent of the character’s deceit, but he senses when something is off. Similarly, when he discovers the previously mentioned intrigue, he is not entirely sure of what he has discovered, but he knows he is onto something as he states, “it must be a plot

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because I don’t know what to make on’t” (pgs. 88-89; 4.1). Scrub’s quote gives a good idea of the skills and limitations of the country bumpkin and foreshadows what is to come with the Jonathan character: he has good instincts, but is often too naïve or inexperienced to know what to do about his observations. Dorinda offers a description that nicely sums up Scrub and many of the country bumpkin types that would prove so popular in early America, “this fellow has a world of simplicity and some cunning: the first hides the latter by abundance” (pg. 45; 3.1).

Perhaps one of the reasons why *The Beaux’ Stratagem* proved to be one of the most popular plays in early America lies in the setting and social environment of the play. The majority of manners plays take place in the city (at this point, that generally means London) and the world of the play is largely populated by members of the upper echelons of society. *The Beaux’ Stratagem* main focus is still upon members of the same society with city problems, but the play takes place outside the city and contains a broader set of characters. The play was more representative in that it has more classes represented and is not solely aristocratic; in addition it also has a more rural setting. While American audiences would have been seeing the show in a city, the colonies were more rural in general, to anything in London. One can see how the play would appeal to different audiences through America’s stages of development. While the play still follows many English theatre conventions and focuses on members of London society, an aspect that would cater to British loyalists, its wider range of characters and displacement from London society would appeal to burgeoning American nationalists.

Scrub was a big part of the appeal to audiences and there are many similarities between him and the Jonathan character that will be examined further when discussing *The Contrast*. One of the significant aspects of the Scrub character is his place in the world. To this point, many country bumpkin types in manners plays had been country gentlemen or as they are
frequently referred to, country squires. *The Way of the World’s* Sir Wilfull Witwould is an example of a country squire. While he has a gentleman’s title he lives outside of the city and is an outsider to the society of the play and very much a country bumpkin. While Scrub is a country bumpkin, he is not a country squire, but a servant. He is a worker, something that will appeal to the American audience and take hold in future creations of the county bumpkin type. While the audience did not likely aspire to be a servant, there was an appreciation for a character that actually had to work and was not a member of the aristocracy. Scrub is an example of the common man and also defends the basic goodness of common men in an argument with Gipsy:

GYPSY: How now, impudence; how dare you talk so saucily to the doctor? Pray, sir, don’t take it ill, for the common people of England are not so civil to strangers as –

SCRUB: You lie, you lie. ‘Tis the common people that are civilest to strangers.

(4.1)

He shows deference to people that he sees as his superiors, but he does not willingly submit to people merely because of their title. Instead of only finding worth in people of high social standing, he appreciates the common man and sees value in himself and in his place.

Another intriguing aspect of Scrub that would foretell forthcoming American country bumpkin types is the character’s simple and hyperbolic patriotism. Simple in that he parrots a few ideas that were commonly propagated by the powers that be in England. For example when Scrub states, “I hate a priest, I abhor the French, and I defy the devil. Sir, I’m a bold Briton and will spill the last drop of my blood to keep out popery and slavery” (4.1). Of course, Scrub’s patriotism is for Great Britain, which naturally appeals to loyalists, but the concept of the type’s patriotism can easily be transferred to America. The play was performed into 1774, it
continued to be performed by the British military during the war, and returned to popularity with
the American public after the war was over. 89 When regular theatrical activity resumed, if
looking at playbills the only noticeable difference was that before and during the Revolution
many a bill ended with the phrase Vivant Rex & Regina, or long live the King and Queen, and
after the war, bills switched to Vivant Republica, long live the Republic. 90

Although anti-British sentiments remained after the Revolution, the continuing influence
Great Britain had on theatre was undeniable as much of the repertoire was still made up of
British plays, The Beaux’ Stratagem being a prime example. Certain aspects of these shows
could appeal to the values and priorities of the new country, for example Joseph Addison’s Cato.
The play focuses on the Roman general and on the struggle for liberty in the face of a controlling
government and has a nationalistic bent that appealed to Americans, but like The Beaux’
Stratagem the play’s origin was still British.

With the war over, there was still a considerable amount of discussion on the value of
theatre in the newly formed country. In addition to concerns of theatre being in many ways a
cultural commodity of England, there also lingered many religious objections to the stage. Some
of this debate can be witnessed in the actions of groups performing while others tried to shut
them down, and the debate is also verbalized in many opinion pieces published in contemporary
newspapers. One of the key arguments voiced in favor of theatre is that it can be a teaching tool,
something that can instill the morals of the nation in its populace. What was lacking was an
American voice.

89 Odai Johnson and William J. Burling, The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar

90 Play advertisements frequently ended with these phrases. British occupied New York continued the royal salute
through the war. Specific examples using the Beaux’ Stratagem, Royal Gazette (New York) May 9, 1778, pg. 3, and
after the war allegiance was pledged to the republic, Independent Journal (New York) March 10, 1787, pg. 3.
Americans were writing, but the majority of the plays that had been written were closet dramas and not particularly suited for the stage. An America voice emerged when Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* premiered April 16, 1787. Historically, it is important because it was the first comedy written by an American to be professionally produced and it is particularly significant to this study because it is a manners play that includes the Jonathan character, a country bumpkin type that will be hugely influential on American drama.

In addition to the importance of the play’s use of character types, the significance of the author’s provenance is crucial in analyzing the relationship between the play and the public. It is often easy to look back at moments in history and proclaim the importance of an event, but it is seldom that those proclamations can be easily made in that moment in time. *The Contrast* is an exception in that the contemporary audience knew that the authorship of the play was deeply significant. As many people continued to have a negative opinion of the theatre, it is not surprising that Tyler did not initially have his name released as the author of the play. Despite the initial anonymity of the playwright, the author’s origin still played a key role in the promotion and reception of the work. In the play’s first advertisements, it is noted that the comedy was “written by a CITIZEN of the United States”\(^{91}\) [see fig. 2]. Not only does the advertisement tell the audience that the writer is American, but it tells us in all capital letters. There is a clear emphasis on the playwright’s origin especially considering that many authors were not noted at all in brief newspaper advertisements.

While Tyler’s name was not initially released with the play, it became public knowledge that he was the author and he was mentioned in the newspapers. Even in anonymity, the American authorship of the play was emphasized, and the readily available information on Tyler

\(^{91}\) *Daily Advertiser*, 4/14/1787, vol. III, issue 667, pg. 3.
only increased the Americaness of the authorship. Tyler was a lawyer by trade, but briefly served as an officer during the Revolutionary War,\textsuperscript{92} and was once again in military service when he wrote the play. With Tyler as the author, not only was the playwright an American, but an American who had served in the military. A bit more detail will be given to Tyler’s background, but what is important to know at this moment is what the public may have known of him at the time. Mainly, that just shortly before \textit{The Contrast} was written and produced, Tyler had played a part in quelling Shay’s Rebellion and had been mentioned in several papers.\textsuperscript{93}

Notices and reviews of the play continued to put emphasis on the author’s country of birth by either stating it was the work of a citizen or an “American dramatic genius.”\textsuperscript{94} Along with the emphasis put on the author’s origin, there was a great deal of interest in the lessons that could be taught by an American voice. There was still a fair amount of antitheatrical sentiment in the country. Some had religious objections or found theatre frivolous, but many looked upon theatre as being British at a time when many wanted to form a separate national identity. Supporters of \textit{The Contrast} saw the play as a tool for advancing/teaching American ideals.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{92} There is record of Tyler enlisting in the Boston Independent Company led by John Hancock and Henry Jackson. Massachusetts, Office of the Secretary of State, \textit{Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War: A Compilation from the Archives}. Tran. . Ed. . XVI Vol. (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1907) 240. From contemporary accounts and other recorded moments in his life, the time spent in this position and Tyler’s exposure to battle was brief.

\textsuperscript{93} Shay’s Rebellion was a revolt that included many former soldiers in the Continental Army. While officers had an easier time obtaining back pay for their time in the army, the average enlisted soldier involved in the majority of combat was often not fully paid. Post-Revolution America was riddled with intense economic issues that were particularly acute in Massachusetts and many citizens, particularly those not of the upper social class, were heavily burdened with debt. The Rebellion was a reaction to the economic crisis and a new government that was harsh to debtors and people already experiencing economic hardships. See, Leonard L. Richards, \textit{Shays's Rebellion: The American Revolution's Final Battle} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) and David P. Szatmary, \textit{Shays' Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).

\textsuperscript{94} “American Intelligence,” \textit{Pennsylvania Journal} 11/24 1787: 3. Phrases using some form of “American genius” were common in advertisements for the play over the years.

\textsuperscript{95} The list of subscribers for the published edition of the play included many prominent politicians of the day. Declaration of Independence signers Charles Carroll, Thomas McKean, Robert Morris, and William Paca were all subscribers. Signers of the Constitution that requested the play included: William S. Livingston, Thomas Mifflin,
One article argued that *The Contrast* was evidence that “the stage may be justly styled a school for rational instruction and innocent recreation.”\(^{96}\) What is interesting in all of these comments is that the American origin of the author is inextricably linked to the possible positive influences of the play. *The New York Journal* praised it as being a “rational amusement” and that it “exhibits sentiments which reflect upon him the highest honors both as a citizen and a patriot.”\(^{97}\) Another article commented, “nothing can be more praise-worthy than the sentiments of the play throughout. – They are the effusions of an honest, patriot heart.”\(^{98}\) Very little time is spent actually discussing the action of the play; the focus is on being an American. There is a keen interest to not only extoll the American virtues of the play and author, but to define the American identity. The prologue to the play was printed in *The New York Journal* and it appeals to the audience’s sense of nation:

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Exult, each patriot heart – this night is shewn
A piece that we may fairly call our own;
Where the proud titles of “My Lord, Your Grace,”
To humble Mr. and plain Sir, give place.\(^{99}\)
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There is a clear desire for the audience to see the difference between themselves and the British and to embrace and support their own Americanness. The question of what the contemporary concept of American identity entailed can be seen through the characters in *The Contrast*.

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\(^{97}\) “Master; Arithmetic; Mathematics; Propellant; Episcopal; Academy; Philadelphia; Mr. Benjamin West,” *New-York Journal* 04/19 1787, sec. XLI: 3.

\(^{98}\) “Miscellany,” *Massachusetts Centinel* 05/09 1787, sec. II: 60.

\(^{99}\) *Master; Arithmetic; Mathematics; Propellant; Episcopal; Academy; Philadelphia; Mr. Benjamin West*, 3.
While it is clear that there is historical significance to the authorship of *The Contrast*, what about the actual play? Character types are of great interest in this piece because they both conform and diverge from the English models that had been playing on American stages for years. As a whole, it is clear that Tyler was deeply influenced and inspired by English manners plays. He makes mention of the popular manners play *The School for Scandal* in his own work and alludes to a New York production of the piece.100 Tyler was a man of letters and seems familiar with popular plays, but he was from an area that did not openly embrace theatre. There were places in America that were more theatre friendly than others. New York had a strong theatrical presence, Philadelphia battled over its worth, but theatre prevailed, and the Southern states in general had a more open attitude about theatre. However, Tyler was not from any of those areas, but from Boston, a city with long held antitheatrical sentiments. While Boston was the puritanical stronghold of America, and had harsh antitheatrical laws, it was not without theatre. In his incomplete novel, *The Bay Boy*, a piece that is largely autobiographical,101 Tyler relates the trials of going to see a play in Boston:

The front door of the store [where the play was being held] was closed and every crack and keyhole carefully stopped with paper or cotton that no glimmering light might alarm the passing watchman. The entrance was through a bye lane into a door in the backyard, and such was the caution observed that but one person was

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101 *The Bay Boy* was written as a revision, and grew into an expansion of his previous novel, *The Algerine Captive*, but he died before the work was completed. The book is not an autobiography, but it is historically based and matches up with many of the events that occurred in Tyler’s life. Additionally, members of Tyler’s family have commented on the autobiographical nature of much of the material. For more background on the history of *The Bay Boy*, as well as the work itself, see: Royall Tyler, *The Prose of Royall Tytle*, 1st ed. (Montpelier, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 1972).
admitted at a time, while two, one at each end of the lane, were on the watch to see if the person to be admitted had been noticed. No knocking was permitted but a slight scratch announced the approach of the initiated.102

Because of the theatre restrictions it was a private production done in relative secrecy and Tyler notes the Puritans’ thoughts on plays stating, “there were no entertainments public or private which were viewed with such abhorrence by the Puritans as stage plays.”103 Despite the negative attitudes of the area, Tyler’s opposition of those attitudes and love of the theatre is quite clear and the book’s passage on theatre speaks not only to the existence of theatre performances in colonial Boston, but to Tyler’s knowledge and likely attendance of theatre in Boston. Additionally, Tyler would have had access to many English plays in print and the accumulated influence of his theatrical interest is apparent in *The Contrast*.

The plot of *The Contrast* is very basic, and covers the familiar territory of romantic relationships and intrigue. Maria is engaged to a cad who is involved with other women, and while Maria would prefer to marry a more earnest man, she feels duty bound to marry the man her father selected to be her husband. As with most manners plays, the plot is not the most important element. In *The Contrast*, the real focus is to show the contrast between British and American manners and to satirize Americans who affect European fashions. The key characters that are contrasting each other are the pair of Dimple and Jessamy, against Manly and Jonathan. Dimple is an American who has just completed a tour of England and has returned with an affected English manner. Jessamy is his equally affected servant. On the other side, Colonel Manly and his servant Jonathan embrace their nation and wish to be from no other place. If only looking at their names, it is clear whose values Tyler is championing. Dimple is but a small

102  Tyler, 144.
103  Tyler, 142.
indentation, while Manly is masculine and heroic. Jonathan is a country bumpkin type and historically is quite important as a stage Yankee, but Manly is also of great interest because of what he is and what he is not.

Jonathan is very much in the mold of *The Beaux’ Stratagem*’s Scrub and to re-reference Dorinda’s quote on Scrub, Jonathan also “has a world of simplicity and some cunning; the first hides the latter by abundance” (pg. 45; 3.1). Like Scrub, Jonathan is not a doddering country squire, but a workingman. However unlike Scrub, Jonathan does not see himself as a servant, in fact he takes offense to such a suggestion despite having the same job description as a servant. During a dispute over the term servant with Jessamy, Jonathan comments, “I am a true blue son of liberty, for all that. Father said I should come as Colonel Manly’s waiter, to see the world, and all that; but no man shall master me. My father has as good a farm as the colonel” (pg. 60; 2.2). Jonathan’s distinction between servant and waiter is ridiculous and highlights the type’s foolishness, but there is more to it than that. America wanted to see itself as separate from England.

One of the limitations of the former ruling country was its rigid class system. Jonathan commenting that he will have no master and that his family is as good as another’s hits upon the idea of equality, a concept that is present in much of the times’ rhetoric and is a cornerstone to the nation’s identity. What makes this passage particularly interesting is that it manages to touch on that American ideal while also revealing its failings. During the same conversation, when Jessamy asks Jonathan if he is Manly’s servant, Jonathan responds, “servant! Sir, do you take me for a neger” (pg. 60; 2.2). It is a reminder that the national identity that is being shaped and projected is limited.
Opportunities for social mobility in America were better than in England and the Revolution had provided a way for some men to raise their station through the military. However, the new nation was still populated with countless people who had little to no chance to improve their standing, most notably, slaves, women, and the Native Americans whose freedoms had been trampled. The 1790 census, the country’s first, provides a glimpse at the makeup of the country’s inhabitants. The questions on the first census were few, and Native Americans were not included, but the numbers still give an idea of America at the end of the eighteenth century. Approximately eighteen percent of the nation’s population was slaves and nearly forty percent of the white population was female. Additionally, there were many poor white males, some of whom were still indentured servants, who were also lacking in power or influence. The world of the play projects the vision of the upper classes, but the reality of other parts of the population is not purposefully addressed. Some of the nation’s reality can be seen on a simple newspaper page that is advertising a reading of The Contrast, a play that espouses the American ideal of equality, directly above a notice offering a reward for runaway slaves.

By their very nature, manners plays have a limited scope. They do not give an accurate picture of all reaches of society, but they are frequently a projection of the ruling class. In the case of The Contrast and other literature of the time, that entails building a national identity for America, an identity built on the concepts of freedom and equality. The focus in manners plays is frequently on white, upper-class men, but even in that setting a bigger picture can be seen if only looking at what is not there.

104 White women are specified because the census was not constructed to ascertain the sex of anyone who was not white. Social Explorer Dataset, “Census 1790,” Digitally transcribed by Inter-university Consortium for political and Social Research, edited, verified by Michael Haines, compiled, edited and verified by Social Explorer.

105 Pennsylvania Journal 12/08 1787: 3.
Jonathan sees himself as “a true blue son of liberty,” who has the opportunity to do and be who he wants (pg. 60; 2.2). Regardless of the likelihood of that, the idea that the everyman is somebody is an appealing concept. This concept is hit upon again in a conversation between Jessamy and Jonathan:

JONATHAN: we don’t make any great matter of distinction in our state between quality and other folks.

JESSAMY: This is, indeed a leveling principle. (pg. 61; 2.2)

Another aspect that is key to the country bumpkin and highlighted in the Jonathan character is a straightforward manner of speaking. Upon listening to Jessamy’s needlessly fanciful way of speaking, a confused Jonathan asks, “what the dogs need of all this outlandish lingo??” (pg. 61; 2.2). This comment emphasizes Jonathan’s lack of social polish and in addition to his own unrefined way of speaking, makes him a humorous figure. That being said, Jonathan also has a point. What prompts Jonathan’s statement is a particularly overworked utterance from Jessamy: “Well, Sir, we will not quarrel about terms upon the eve of an acquaintance from which I promise myself so much satisfaction; - therefore, sans ceremonie -” (pgs. 61-62; 2.2). Even without the French phrase, his point is not clear. Jessamy’s language is overly flowery, when he could easily be more direct. When Jonathan does not understand what Jessamy is getting at, Jessamy rephrases his comment to the more direct and understandable, “I say I am extremely happy to see Colonel Manly’s waiter” (pg. 61; 2.2). Jessamy’s new phrasing supports Jonathan’s emphasis on more direct speech and also shows Jessamy and his society’s affectation of speech. However, Jessamy does not see Jonathan’s point or his value.

Throughout the play Jessamy and others comment on how they see Jonathan. Jessamy makes reference to Jonathan’s lack of refinement when he refers to him as a “brute” (pg. 61;
Jenny, another servant, refers to Jonathan as a “stupid creature” twice (pgs. 70, 74; 3.1) and also refers to him as a “brute” (pg. 76; 3.1). But there is value to be found in Jonathan. Despite not understanding everything that goes on around him and his rough manner of speaking, Jonathan is often a better communicator simply because he does not affect foreign manners and is direct.

Part of the reason that others see Jonathan as stupid is because he is naïve and takes things at face value. He refers to a statue as “two marble-stone men and a leaden horse,” (pg. 62; 2.2) and he goes to a place called the Holly Ground, with his hymn book looking for a church, not realizing that he was in the red-light district and the woman he spoke to is not a “deacon’s daughter,” (pg. 62; 2.2) but a prostitute. Jonathan also goes to a play without realizing it and describes his outing all the while oblivious to his theatre experience: “they lifted up a great green cloth and let us look right into the next neighbor’s house” (pg. 72; 3.1). With his naivety, Jonathan also has the type’s insight; he can often see through the front that is presented to see what is actually there. He does not realize that Jessamy is trying to manipulate him, but can tell that the social niceties he has been informed about are often a construction of lies. The rules of society tell him one thing and his common sense tells him another.

Act five, scene one in particular provides an opportunity to see the society’s affectations and Jonathan’s reaction to such behavior. Jessamy tells Jonathan that his reactions and behavior are not acceptable to society and he must be trained in the proper social manners. Jessamy’s tool to instruct Jonathan comes from Dimple’s writings on how to behave at the theatre, specifically when and how to laugh and smile at given points during the play. Jonathan is criticized for the way he laughs and Jessamy comments that, “you may laugh; but you must laugh by rule” (pg. 106). For more information on the development of prostitution in New York see: Larry Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997). Besides the time period listed in the title, the book also provides an early history of prostitution in the city.
The play is satirizing societal rules, and Jonathan is being used to show the ridiculousness of some of those rules. Throughout Jessamy’s instructions, Jonathan makes a series of sensible statements that boil down to why should anyone put on such affectations. To be clear, while Jessamy’s instructions are ridiculous, they are not something that he has created. Dimple and his instructions seem foolish, but in his own society, he appears to be liked and is sought after by many women. Tyler is not only commenting on Dimple, but a society that embraces him. They do not yet fully embody the American identity that is being pushed.

Along with his naivety, an aspect of the country bumpkin type that is readily on display in Jonathan is his honesty. He might not know or understand everything, but he is mindful of the truth. He is not always honest, but is very aware of even the most minor lies that he makes. When he makes a small lie to Jenny, under the advice of Jessamy, Jonathan states, “gor, that’s a fib, though” (pg. 76; 3.1). In another instance, he tells Jenny that he can sing all of the verses to Yankee Doodle, but revises his statement admitting, “that’s a fib – I can’t sing but a hundred and ninety verses” (pg. 75; 3.1). While this is a joke, it does speak to the character’s straightforward demeanor by correcting such an unimportant claim. It is not as if the type is incapable of lying or never does, but in an environment where characters tell countless little and big lies without much thought, the country bumpkins are overly aware of their acts of dishonesty.

Like most country bumpkins, Jonathan never looks more foolish than when trying to fit into a society of which he is not a member. Jonathan fails when trying to use fancy language and to court a city woman, but he realizes the error of trying to alter his manner and decides to stay true to himself. His naivety may make him look foolish or unpolished, but at least he will be judged for himself and not a façade. This aspect of the country bumpkin type works particularly well here as the play is calling out Americans affecting English manners.
It must be stated that there is no truewit in the play. Manly is the sympathetic male lead, but instead of being clever and charming, he is earnest and patriotic. He is more comparable to the hero of a sentimental play, but he does not really fit that mold either. He is not the reformed rake that is often found in sentimental comedies, nor is he a character in a tragedy. Traditionally, the manners genre puts emphasis on the leading male character’s wit, but with America’s first manners comedy, the focus has shifted. Jonathan and many of his country bumpkin attributes deserve careful analysis because that straightforward, simple way of being is not only being championed, but is also being placed on the central male figure. These characteristics, characteristics that Tyler is positing as, and much of the audience is eager to embrace as American, are set up as being counter to many perceived European and more specifically, English manners.

Dimple serves as an example of a wrecked American who does not live up to or display the nation’s values. Letitia notes that Maria had observed that through his travel, “the ruddy youth, who washed his face at the cistern every morning, and swore and looked eternal love and constancy, was now metamorphosed into a flippant, pallid, polite beau” (pg. 44; 1.1). Dimple has been ruined from a decent American man after his travels in England. It is worth noting that he has not acquired wit in his travels. While there is definitely anti-English sentiment in the play, the criticism is more pointed at Americans attempting to adopt English manners. They are trying to be something they are not. So, along with adopting manners that are not of his own country, Dimple also lacks the attributes that are being pushed as being American. For example, Maria describes him as being “insensible to the emotions of patriotism” (pg. 51; 1.2).

The value of patriotism is brought up many times in The Contrast and was a vital ideal to many in an effort to mold the country. Shay’s Rebellion was an indicator of an uncertain future
and the promotion of a patriotic stance was an attempt to counteract the rumblings of discontent masses. Shay’s Rebellion was a significant episode in American history because it was not a protest against an established government, but signified dangerous unrest in a still burgeoning nation. The United States was still attempting to recover from the war, and was struggling with economic difficulties and a still unstable government. At this early point in the nation’s history its continued existence and hoped for prosperity were still very uncertain.

Shay’s Rebellion can be seen as some angry farmers and soldiers dissatisfied with their tax burden, but its implications and possibilities were much more concerning at the time. On the one hand, the complaints that the rebels had were not totally different than many of the issues leading to the Revolution. The more rural and poor inhabitants of Massachusetts took exception to a distant government that they thought was out of touch with their needs and that was placing upon them too much of a financial burden. On the other hand, many that had some degree of power and were generally of a higher social class felt that the rebellion was treasonous and not relatable to the issues that sparked the war. There was still a sense of uneasiness in the country and war breaking out again seemed like a real possibility. Men like Tyler, who were educated and in the upper class, were champions of the new country, a new country where they had a significant amount of power. From their perspective, independence from England was an improvement and the United States offered an abundance of new possibilities.

This was a crucial moment in the development of the country as it was in economic crisis and the future was uncertain. The Constitution was on the verge of being drafted, and many wanted to express their opinions on what America and Americans should be. Men in a position of power and influence saw a land of opportunity and in works like *The Contrast*, wanted to
promote what they saw as American ideals. Of course, this idyllic vision did not exist for everyone (or even most), but it was the projection of members of the class that held power.

In *The Contrast*, Manly alludes to Shay’s Rebellion (and Tyler’s own involvement) when he states, “the public tumults of our state have induced me to buckle on the sword in support of that government which I once fought to establish” (pg. 58; 2.1). Manly is of the upper class and sees the revolt as a dangerous and unjustified uprising. Like Tyler, Manly also feels it is his duty to educate others on the evils of the Rebellion and the greatness of America. Jonathan, not a member of the upper class, but more of a middle class, average man representative, admits to sympathizing with the rebels. It is quite likely that many poor Americans sympathized with the rebels and that many in the middle class were torn. In *The Contrast*, Tyler is cognizant of these sympathies, but argues against them. Jonathan recounts what Manly told him about the Rebellion:

Colonel said that it was a burning shame for the true blue Bunker Hill sons of liberty, who had fought Governor Hutchinson, Lord North, and the Devil, to have any hand in kicking up a cursed dust against a government which we had, every mother’s son of us, a hand in making. (pg. 62; 2.2)

Although it is not something that can be obtained by much of the population, the concepts of freedom and independence are being pushed as crucial components of being a real American and are key in the American version of the character types. To have a different vision, in this case to not be a champion of the new country and government, not only makes one un-American, but less of a man.

Dimple is the representative target of the play’s satire, but the criticism is directed at everyone who is overly concerned with foreign fashions. In fact the criticism is aimed directly at
the society that generally populates manners plays and the likely audience of the play. In their banter, Manly’s sister, Charlotte and her friend Letitia describe fashionable New York society to the new to town Manly:

LETITIA: Our ladies are so delicate and dressy

CHARLOTTE: And our beaux simper and bow so gracefully.

LETITIA: With their hair so trim and neat.

CHARLOTTE: And their faces so soft and sleek.

LETITIA: Their buckles so tonish and bright.

CHARLOTTE: And their hands so slender and white. (pg. 57; 2.1)

Their description is reminiscent to how British characters often describe French characters. They are feminizing the men in their description and in this play that is equivalent to being weak and having very little purpose.

The women in The Contrast are ineffectual. While women in Restoration England were often used as chattel to build relations and wealth with other men and had little power, the women in Restoration comedies were frequently depicted as having moments of wit and self-reliance. They were not the ultimate masters of their fate, that was not how society was constructed, but female characters often had some amount of control in their relationships. That is not the case in The Contrast.

Manners plays frequently focus on white males (those with the most power) and increasingly plays in the genre featured women lacking in power. In The Contrast, the women are completely subservient. Maria in particular, who is the heroine of the piece, lacks agency. She is presented as being smart and having a solid character, but she plays only a small part in her own future. She pales in comparison to a character like The Way of the World’s Millamant.
While both women are in a system where they have limited power, Millamant was a mental equal or superior to the other characters and did all that she could to determine her outcome. Maria is knowledgeable, but is decidedly not self-reliant. She comments, “who is it that considers the helpless situation of our sex, that does not see that we each moment stand in need of a protector” (pg. 47; 1.2). She goes on to describe women as “incapable, from our ignorance of the world, to guard against the wiles of mankind” (pg. 47; 1.2). She is wise enough to know that Dimple is trouble and not the man for her, but she does nothing to free herself from the match. She resigns herself to other’s judgment and is only saved by the actions of a man.

Female characters, which already had a power disadvantage in manners plays, took another step backwards in *The Contrast*. Maria offers up no fight, her response to her father is merely “sir, I am all submission. My will is yours” (pg. 49; 1.2). Her submission to the wisdom of men makes her the ideal woman in the world of the play. The other female characters are also lacking and are presented as being frivolous and shallow. Charlotte and Letitia provide some humorous repartee, but they do so without having full knowledge or understanding of their situation. They are all surface and no depth and are dependent on men to solve their problems and guide their lives. Manners plays generally take place in a patriarchal society and are focused on white males, so it is not surprising that the women are used as props. However, in *The Contrast*, the worth of female characters has been further devalued.

One of the main purposes that Charlotte and Letitia serve in the play is as comparisons to male characters. All the women in *The Contrast* are used as tools to judge the value of the men. In the world of the play and the society that created it, women do not have the same value as men. Keeping the concept of women’s worth in mind, Charlotte and Letitia’s description of the men in New York society becomes even more censorious. The men are described in terms of
aesthetics and are valued for their looks. In other words, Tyler is equating the English affecting men to women. The idea is that they are not real men and they are described for what they are not: strong and robust, presumably what a good American man should be. The emasculation of the over gentrified society is completed when Charlotte notes that, “such is the delicacy of their complexion, dress, and address, that, even had I no reliance upon the honour of the dear Adonises, I would trust myself in any possible situation with them, without the least apprehensions of rudeness” (pg. 57; 2.1). The statement being made by Tyler through the play is that to not embrace one’s Americaness is to not be a man.

Manly is overly patriotic and proclaims the greatness of America. When Dimple is encouraging Manly to visit Europe and experience what he feels is a superior culture, Manly has no interest because he “can never esteem that knowledge valuable which tends to give me a distaste for my native country” (pg. 85; 4.1). While he does not have high regard for Dimple’s opinion, Manly’s response to him is quite interesting. He does not bother trying to argue that Dimple is incorrect, but instead embraces the idea of ignorance. Perhaps Manly sees no point in arguing with someone he has little respect for, regardless maintaining pride and loyalty in his native land is of the upmost importance. Shay’s Rebellion served as reminder that there were Americans who were disgruntled with their nation and did not share the enthusiasm of Manly or Tyler. This is particularly intriguing, because it puts the leading male character in a position where he does not know or wish to know everything, and instead is touting the value of naivety, a key aspect in the country bumpkin type.

Manly has a lot in common with the country bumpkin. While he is lacking the overtly foolish aspects of the type, he is endowed with some of the type’s more positive characteristics. Instead of possessing the worldly knowledge of a truewit, Manly possesses more innocence or
naivety, even if that naivety is somewhat forced. Most notably, Manly is honest and straightforward, characteristics that are to be adapted and purported as being key aspects of an American identity. The most valued trait of the truewit is of course wit, but that characteristic does not have the same value in the new country; what is valued is the notion of common sense.

Dimple, again serves to demonstrate the difference between affected English manners and embracing one’s American identity when he looks foolish and defeated, but refers to himself as “a gentleman who has read Chesterfield and received the polish of Europe,” and to the triumphant or superior Manly as “an unpolished, untraveled American” (pg. 98; 5.2). Manly also fits into the country bumpkin characteristic of being an outsider. The play takes place in New York society, and Manly and Jonathan both are from Boston. For this singular play, that clearly makes Manly an outsider, but it also alludes to a bigger picture that will be seen in many plays to come. As a new country, and one that is far away from the European society it was birthed from, many of America’s inhabitants saw themselves as outsiders. In a sense, to be an American was to be an outsider to the English culture that dominated the land for so long. The truewit type that led English manners plays seemed overly English and not particularly American. The type lacked traits that were being forged as being key aspects to the American identity. Dimple refers to Manly as a “Bumkin,” (pg. 78; 3.2) perhaps an indication that the truewit and country bumpkin of English manners plays intertwine in America. The American truewit is to be more earnest and straightforward. That is not yet achieved with Manly, but the importance of the country bumpkin type and the transformation of the truewit are seen in *The Contrast*.

The end of the eighteenth century saw the creation of an American manners play and with that the beginnings of character types being shaped to fit the constructed identity of the new country. Counter to many of the actualities of the country and much of its population some of
the championed ideals included freedom and independence. The American identity was that of an independent white male that was straightforward and imbued with common sense. The development and expansion of that identity would continue into the next century.

For years, theatre had fought to gain acceptance in America against religious and financial concerns, and in the next century theatre would become a stronger presence. In the 1800s more Americans were writing plays, and the manners plays and the character types that inhabit them, offer a glimpse into the society of that era. Men of the upper classes still dominate and shape the presented identity, but a broader view of society begins to emerge.
Mr. Upton (to his great Disappointment) not meeting with Encouragement enough to support the Company for the Season, intends to shorten it, by performing 5 or 6 Plays only, for Benefit, and begins with his own on Monday the 20th Instant. His Play is a celebrated COMEDY, called, TUNBRIDGE WALKS, or, THE YEOMAN of KENT; his Entertainment, The LYING VALET. And as hitherto Encouragement has been little, hopes the Gentleman and Ladies will favour him that Night.

[Fig. 1] New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy 01/13 1752: 3.

THEATRE.

On Monday Evening,

(Never Performed)

(Being the 16th of April)

WILL BE PERFORMED,

A COMEDY of 5 Acts, written by a

CITIZEN of the United States, Called

The Contrast,

To which will be added the English BURAGO,
\]

LETTA, Called

MIDAS.

[Fig. 2] Daily Advertiser, 4/14/1787, vol. III, issue 667, pg. 3.
CHAPTER 3
Fashioning a Culture

*The Contrast* was an anomaly for the early American theatre. While Royall Tyler was embraced for being an American, the nineteenth century would often be unfavorable to native playwrights. Foreign plays still ruled the boards and melodrama and spectacle were becoming increasingly popular. The 1800s were not a prolific time for manners plays in the United States, but even with their limited presence they left a strong mark on the culture and vice-versa. The signature manners play for this time period comes during the middle of the century. *Fashion* (1845), by Anna Cora Mowatt, continues many of the themes presented in *The Contrast*, but also takes the genre and the character types in some interesting, new directions. To better understand the development of the character types in *Fashion*, it is vital to examine some key events that helped to shape the era in which it was written.

Despite the Revolution, in many ways The United States was still very connected to Great Britain. The former ruling country was America's number one trade partner, and on a cultural level the new country was still very dependent, especially in the theatre. Most of the actors were still British as were many of the plays. Shakespeare was still popular as were the works of Beaumont and Fletcher. The plays were not just limited to classic works though as new plays were constantly being imported from England and the rest of Europe. When successful foreign plays were not enough to lure in audiences, theatres relied on the public’s great curiosity about things that were deemed exotic. At times, these elements were worked into the shows, but

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that was not even necessary. Like English theatre during the Restoration, the audience was part of the draw, particularly when a special guest was advertised. Theatres often made use of "attractions" in the audience and advertised them to bring the curious into their theatres. American Indians and foreigners of all sorts were often trotted out and then seated in a visible section just to draw in the curious; if the audience liked the play, all the better.\textsuperscript{108} The interest in American customs and manners was not high.

The theatrical climate at this time can be seen through the eyes and words of American playwright James Nelson Barker who noted that plays, "unhappily of American parentage" often faced an unwelcoming public.\textsuperscript{109} He also showed an awareness of the audience’s taste when he commented on a conversation with a friend who tells him that the American manners play that Barker had written would not be popular and that the playwright would be better off writing a “a melo-drama, and lay your scene in the moon.”\textsuperscript{110} Regardless of that knowledge and advice, Barker did have his play produced.

Like many American playwrights of the early years of the republic, Barker was only a part time playwright. He was a prominent gentleman from Philadelphia, and like Tyler served in the military and was a politician. Also like Tyler, Barker was very much a member of the ruling class, a white, wealthy male, from a powerful family. While his plays and views were significantly more American oriented than the foreign plays that were popular, they also had a

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[108] A notable example of this occurred in New York in March and April of 1805. Turkish prisoners of war were brought to the theatre numerous times to attract patrons. \textit{The Morning Chronicle} was helpful enough to point out just where the attraction would be by noting, “the stage box will be occupied by the Turks.” This was billed before the actual play that would be performed that evening. \textit{The Morning Chronicle} (New York, New York), March 28, 1805, Issue 764, pg. 2.
\item[110] Paul H Musser, and James N. Barker, \textit{James Nelson Barker 1784-1858: With a Reprint of His Comedy "Tears and Smiles"}, Philadelphia, 1929, 142.
\end{itemize}
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limited worldview that like many works before ignored the majority of the American population that did not fit into the overclass.

Barker was fairly successful as a playwright, especially considering he was an American. He is best known for writing, *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage*, a musical comedy loosely based on the life of Pocahontas. Much of the play’s success can be attributed to its exoticism of the American Indians. The trend of white writers using Native characters in their plays would continue to grow. This was not just true of American playwrights, but of European writers as well. They were fascinated with American Indians, but only in terms of perpetuating their own culture. The American Indians in the plays were not complex and while their plight could offer up bountiful story elements, the focus was on the American Indians through the eyes of the European.\(^{111}\)

Despite the success of *The Indian Princess*, Barker felt the burden of the anti-American playwright phenomenon. In his preface to the play he comments, “In sending it to the press I am perfectly apprized of the probability that it goes only to add one more to the list of those unfortunate children of the American drama, who, in the brief space that lies between their birth and death, are doomed to wander, without house or home, unknown and unregarded, or who, if heeded at all, are only picked up by some critic beadle to receive the usual treatment of vagrants.”\(^{112}\) Barker’s comments were not limited to just one work. Of particular interest to this study, one of his earliest works was a manners comedy, *Tears and Smiles*. While the play was staged more than once, it was not a success. This perhaps speaks to the audience’s lack of


\(^{112}\) [Indian Princess] Preface, 115.
interest in American manners, while the success of *The Indian Princess* appealed to the curiosity for the exotic. In his preface to *Tears and Smiles*, Barker tells a story of a conversation he had with a friend after reading the play and the perils of writing an American comedy. The friend informs Barker that he had written “Columbianisms,” a word:

invented and applied by certain hypercritics of our own, who, perhaps from being placed too near the scene, cannot discover the beauties of their own country, and whose refined taste is therefore better pleased with the mellow tints which distance gives to every foreign object. This term of derision they apply to every delineation an American may attempt to make of American manners, customs, opinions, characters, or scenery.\(^{113}\)

Clearly aware that the play’s American origin would be more of a hindrance than a help, an admonishing prologue was given before the performance that entreated the audience to appreciate their own native American culture and asked:

Good, gentle trav'lers, do not then, I pray,
Like some ungracious tourists, curse the way,
From Dan to Beersheba, and back to Dan,
As vile, simply because American.
But, if some humble beauties catch your sight,
Behold them in their proper, native light;
Not peering through discol'ring foreign prisms,
Find them but hideous, rank Columbianisms.\(^{114}\)


\(^{114}\) Ibid., 144.
As was ridiculed in *The Contrast*, the main target of American manners playwrights still remained the public’s aping of foreign customs and shunning of American culture.

While *The Contrast* highlighted the need for an American identity and culture, the country was still tied to England. Despite their asserted independence, the new country was still closely connected to their former rulers in economics and culture. While there was a real bond between the two, the connection was also a physic one. On an internal level it was difficult to feel a separation between the two, and America was often thought of as just an extension of England or a lesser version of the former ruling country. The United States did not yet possess a true identity of its own. The need for this firm and separate identity would be a theme not just in literature, but in the overall country and culture as well. Despite the revolution, many in the country felt as though they were still seen as a British possession. Perhaps the largest and most far-reaching example of this inferiority complex and the struggle to assert national pride and identity can be seen in the war of 1812.

As Napoleonic Wars were raging across Europe, the United States was caught between France and Britain and it negatively affected their trade. The British had blockaded parts of the European coastline to restrict France’s access to supplies and trade. However, this also restricted other countries like the United States from trade as well. The United States saw this as an infringement on its rights as an independent nation. America was now its own country, but Great Britain was still making regulations that affected the American economy. As can be seen in the largely foreign plays that were produced by American theatres, the country was also still in thrall to English culture. American playwright Barker found himself again in the middle of this issue when his play *Marmion* was credited to an English author in an attempt to bring the production
more prestige and patrons. The newspaper ads trumpeted “for the first time in America,” which was true as it was the first time it was performed anywhere, and gave credit to current English playwright Thomas Morton. The play premiered just two months prior to the War.

Despite the growing hostilities between America and Great Britain, the theatre was still dependent on foreign and mainly British talents. Other than the perception that foreign works would bring in a bigger audience, there was a dependence on British players and their largely British repertoire. A perusal of American newspapers throughout the war illustrates not only the continuing dependence on the English stage, but a celebration of it. While there were frequent short patriotic pieces, playbills were often advertised with the approval that the play was English and what’s more, English audiences enjoyed the play. The same papers that reported on British and American battles also declared importance of the British stage. A popular refrain found in ads was, “As performed in London with great applause,” or replace London with any number of English theatres. Some advertisements even managed to be patriotic and pro-British theatre in one announcement. The Columbian ran an advertisement for the theatre that announced a special event for, “the anniversary of that memorable day that gave birth to George Washington,” that would have a “patriotic sketch” and “naval songs” in celebration as well as a main piece “performed for the first time in America,” and “as now performing in London with unbounded applause.” In other words, to get American audiences to see a play, theatres advertised its

117 The Columbian (New York, New York) Oct. 9, 1812, pg. 2, “Boston Theatre,” The Repertory and General Advertiser (Boston, Massachusetts) May 12, 1812, Pg. 3, Federal Republican (Baltimore, Maryland) June 3, 1812, Pg. 2, are all examples of the endorsements of British stage success advertisements.
118 The Columbian, (New York, New York) Feb. 18, 1813, pg. 3. The phrase “unbounded applause” was also frequent in these kinds of advertisements.
English success, a tacit approval of a piece’s worth. A unique culture was forming in the new country, but it would take time for that culture to be recognized and embraced by many of the nation’s inhabitants. Like the development of the theatre and evolving American character types and identity, on the political front the United States was still trying to get out from under England’s far casting shadow.

In waging war on each other, England and France seriously infringed on the rights of nations that were not involved in the conflict. As France and especially Great Britain were America’s main partners in trade [see fig. 3], this had a profound effect on the nation.\footnote{Graph created with information from, Douglas A. Irwin, “Exports, by country of destination: 1790–2001,” Table Ee533-550 in \textit{Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition}, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.} England passed a series of laws referred to as British Orders in Council.\footnote{Three acts in particular hampered American trade. See: \textit{The London Gazette}, Jan. 10, 1807, \textit{The London Gazette}, Nov. 16, 1807, \textit{The London Gazette}, April 29, 1809.} In 1806 Great Britain implemented a blockade on the coast of Europe to block France from getting supplies and to hurt the French economy by cutting off their shipping lanes. France reacted by pledging to seize all British goods, even if they were on neutral ships. Furthermore, France would not accept ships that had been in British ports. This back and forth between the warring parties continued to escalate until neutral nations were basically forced into choosing a side. The British blockade forced ships to pay a tax and receive permission to trade and if the ships acquiesced to this, then they were considered an enemy by France. In other words, England and France acted as though they owned the oceans, and it was impossible to remain neutral and still maintain trade relations with the nations. The two countries did not have the authority to inflict these broad decrees, but they did have sizable navies, Great Britain in particular, to enact them.\footnote{Donald R. Hickey, \textit{The War Of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict} (Urbana: University Of Illinois Press, 2012).}
In an attempt to counteract these trade restrictions, President Thomas Jefferson decided to level some trade restrictions of his own. In 1807 the Embargo Act passed which virtually shut down all legal overseas trade in the country.\footnote{Annals of Congress, 10\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1st sess., 2814-15.} The idea was that the two warring nations were dependent on American resources and markets, and without them would be forced to rethink their own trade laws. This did not work. Many ships continued to trade and were still victim to Great Britain’s and France’s orders. Trade in the United States suffered heavily because it hurt both importing and exporting. Foreign ships were less likely to come with goods if they were unable to buy goods to sell on their return to port. Meanwhile, France and Great Britain kept their restrictions in place and America’s economy suffered.

After proving ineffective, in 1809 changes were made to the United States’ burdensome embargo law by just restricting trade with France and Great Britain.\footnote{Annals of Congress, 10\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2nd sess., 1824-30.} The following year, restrictions were further decreased to basically nothing with the stipulation that if one of the warring nations would respect America’s maritime rights it would ban trade with the other country.\footnote{Annals of Congress, 11\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2nd sess., 2582-3.} The repealment of the embargo acts improved trade and the economy in America, but the damage had already been done.

The free trade issues were not just about the economy. These acts and the country’s subsequent suffering injured America’s claim as an independent nation both at home and abroad. What did it say about American identity if its economy could be controlled by outside powers? While the United States was neutral in the Napoleonic Wars, its sovereignty was challenged by
the actions of the wars. It was not just a question of trade and economy; it was a question of nationhood and identity.

Issues with the economy led up to the War of 1812, but there were several factors in play. Another key element that sparked the war and inflamed America’s need for identity was the practice of impressment. To man their massive fleet of ships to fight their many war fronts, the British were always in desperate need of sailors. There were never enough volunteers, so they were dependent on conscription. One of America’s main complaints against England was that they sometimes impressed men that the United States viewed as American citizens. Adding to the argument that the United States and its identity was not yet firmly established, it was often difficult to make a distinction of who was an American and who was an Englishman. The United States argued against its citizens being forced to fight for a foreign nation, while the English argued that the men they claimed were really British citizens. What’s more, many British thought that the timing of the war meant that the United States was in allegiance with France. In an opinion that was not at all uncommon at the time, the *Ipswich Journal* summed up the English view of America’s political stance:

> the American government claims as Americans all those English seamen who have passed 12 months in its service. Did the English Government submit to this immoral and anti-national law, it would soon have few seamen to fight its battles; and what would still be more hideous, fathers, brothers, and sons would be shedding each other’s blood, to support the hireling tools of Bonaparte in America.\(^{125}\)

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\(^{125}\) “Wednesday's Post,” *The Ipswich Journal* (Ipswich, England), Saturday, January 2, 1813; Issue 4138.
While the American position was that they were fighting for respect and identity, the English had bigger problems and the Americans were an obstacle to their war with France.

In asserting itself, the United States basically inserted itself into yet another battle between the English and the French. The War of 1812 was in many ways an offshoot or footnote to the Napoleonic Wars. This is particularly true in the eyes of Great Britain. The United States was waging a war to strengthen the country’s own sense of self, as well as build their international reputation. Meanwhile, most of Europe was otherwise occupied in a war that had been ongoing for years and would reshape much of Europe.

Not everyone was in favor of a war with Great Britain. Preceding and during the war there was a significant faction that questioned whether the conflict was a good idea or even necessary. The vote to pass the declaration of war was close and illustrated the discord in the country. Federalists in particular were very vocal about their disagreement with the war and for that sentiment they were frequently branded as being loyalists to Britain.

National identity, or what it meant to be an American, was still very much in question during this time period. There was a strong split between the federalists and the republicans, with the republicans in the pro-war majority. Whether true or not, there was a feeling that the federalists were pro-Britain. There were federalists in all parts of the country, but New England was their stronghold and there was discussion of whether the states and their leaders wanted to stay in the union or rejoin the British Empire. The height of this movement occurred at the Hartford Convention, a gathering of Federalists discussing the war. While most of the meetings


had nothing to do with secession, it was a topic of discussion and presumably a large part of the secret sessions that took place at the convention. Talk of secession was not well received and the party was largely distrusted and ridiculed thereafter [see fig. 4]. Great Britain exasperated this notion by limiting its blockades in New England, while having stricter enforcement on the more Republican and Southern areas of the coast.\(^{129}\) While there were factions in the Northeast that wanted to secede, many of the complaints against the Northeastern states were just slander. The point is that the idea of the country as a single entity was not yet held. The state of the nation as a nation, and a nation separate from England was not yet solidified.\(^{130}\)

Throughout the stretch of the war, different groups within the country sniped at each other about their lack of patriotism. Federalists were largely against the war, and the republicans (who were in power) cast many aspersions on the political party and questioned their loyalty to America. A Massachusetts’ newspaper with a Republican bent, warned of treasonous Federalists and the possibility of secession forming a “Northern Confederacy.”\(^{131}\) Much like today, the animosity was not just between political parties, but coincided with geography as well. The New England states cast aspersions on the Southern states and likewise the Southern states questioned the motives of the Northeastern section of the country. Everyone was unsure about the western region of the country. A Baltimore paper addressed the possibility of the New England states seceding and the goes on to attack Federalist Northern newspapers for their regionalism claiming that they, “ripen the minds of the people of New England for the consummation of the dreadful

\(^{129}\) Jeremy Black, *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon* (Norman, Okla: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2009) 70-71. This book is particularly useful in analyzing the war from a non-American perspective that looks at the war in relation to more international happenings.


scheme, the opposition newspapers there have teemed with misrepresentation and abuse of the southern and western states.\textsuperscript{132}

What this led to was talk of loyalty, patriotism, and secession. Talk of states seceding over political differences was a frequent topic and was often found in the daily papers.\textsuperscript{133} The view expressed in the papers was largely determined by geography and the paper's political bent. People clamoring for secession and citizens filing petitions is nothing new in the history of America and it was just as popular then as it still is now.

Boston's \textit{Weekly Messenger} argued that there was no proof that the federalists or Massachusetts wanted to secede and that the whole accusation was false. Additionally, the article goes on to throw accusations at the rest of the country, "there is much better foundation for the suspicion that the disposition for this separation was at different periods growing in the western and southern states."\textsuperscript{134} The author points a finger at the state of Virginia and accuses that at one point that state wanted to secede concluding that the Southern states are not loyal to the union, but to themselves, and the Northeastern states are the more patriotic while the Southern states are in legion with Great Britain. The author goes on to refer to the antagonists of his cause as "back-wood patriots who rule our destiny."\textsuperscript{135} This sentiment speaks to the growing anti-intellectualism in the country and the popularity of the common sense, natural hero that can be seen in theatre as well through the evolving bumpkin type. This connection between the character type and political figures will be addressed in more detail shortly.

\textsuperscript{132} "Vermont; Republican; December," \textit{American Commercial Daily Advertiser}, Baltimore, Maryland) January 4, 1813, pg. 2.
\textsuperscript{133} Benn 75-76
\textsuperscript{134} "Separation of the Sates," \textit{The Weekly Messenger}, (Boston, Massachusetts) Aug. 21, 1812, issue 44, pg. 1.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
From the very beginning, the war did not go as the Americans planned. Even declaring war proved difficult. While Jefferson was president, Madison was the Secretary of State and was largely behind the embargos. He had attempted to resolve issues with Great Britain for years using diplomatic and commercial means, but had not found success. Madison saw British actions as a challenge to America’s independence and decided that war was necessary. However, he was also in the midst of a reelection and taking a stand against Great Britain can certainly be seen not just as a move to protect national welfare, but a political move to protect his chances of reelection. Madison narrowly got the declaration of war approved and shortly thereafter he was reelected.

While the idea of war was decided on, the planning for the actuality of war was abysmal. Congress did not decide on new taxes before the start of the war and raised custom taxes. However, import and export revenue was down during the war because of the constant blockades and embargos. It is quite likely that many members of the government thought that a full-fledged war was never even intended, or at the very least that the war would be a short one. Almost immediately after war was declared, Madison wanted to enter into negotiations for a peace between the two nations. 136 As America’s main plight was to get England to leave it alone, what they wanted was a bargaining chip, in this case Canada. The hope was to invade British controlled Canada and have Great Britain agree to respect America’s rights as an independent country. The popular opinion was that taking control of Canada would be an easy feat. 137 It was not.

136 During his correspondence from this time period, Madison makes many references to the war being avoided, ending quickly, and being resolved through nonviolent means. He was resolved to enter into war if necessary, but did not want to prolong the conflict. James Madison, The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt, The James Madison Papers, American Memory Library of Congress.

137 In a letter to close confidant, William Duane, Jefferson wrote, “The acquisition of Canada this year, as far as the neighborhood of Quebec, will be a mere matter of marching, and will give us experience for the attack of Halifax
While many Americans thought that the invasion of Canada would be a fairly easy task, it proved quite difficult. Not only were their efforts unsuccessful, but in truth quite embarrassing. The United States government had finally made up its mind to declare war, but what they had not done was prepare themselves for the actuality of war. There was not a large standing army, nor were there strong military leaders for the field. Additionally, they had not raised taxes to finance the war, and with most of the government income coming from taxes and trade tariffs (which given the current state of embargos and blockades was well below what they normally made), they were forced to take out loans to initially fund the action. Attacks were poorly planned, soldiers poorly trained, and many were unwilling to fight. Their dreadful showing was a hit to American pride, but a boost came from an unexpected place. While the land armies’ actions were lacking, the United States navy proved to be more than competent. Considering Britain’s long history of naval dominance and large fleet, the success of American ships in battle was quite a boon. However, there was a catch to American naval success. The British navy was stretched thin all over the world at this point in time fighting France and their allies so they did not have a large focus of force on the American fleet. Despite the larger size of their navy, they had limited

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138 There was extensive opposition to the war in the Northeastern parts of the country, but as that area was closest to Canada, they were called on for action. The country did not have a significant standing army and planned in part to use state militias. The militias in the Northeast were some of the most experienced, but there was strong opposition to them being used in an unwanted war. The militias were setup to protect the local area and there was concern about the militias being used abroad and leaving the North vulnerable. This was further complicated by the desire to attack Canada. On the grounds that militias were intended to protect the home front and not fight foreign wars, many refused to battle in Canada. This, of course, greatly hindered the country’s ability to invade Canada as some of the better trained troops would not fight in a foreign country.

resources with which to fight the Americans. For their part, the United States navy focused their efforts on making superior frigates and fully manning their boats with seamen.140

The action of the War of 1812 was highly dependent on what was going on in Europe. For America, it was about respect and sovereignty, but Great Britain was fighting a much bigger battle in Europe. The war with France was of the upmost importance and until it was resolved it would take priority over the conflict with the United States. That being said, the British were embarrassed by naval losses to the United States, "Is it not sickening to see that no experience has been sufficient to rouse our Admiralty to take measures that may protect the British flag from such disgrace?"141 But the fortunes of the British were about to change. On the European front, Napoleon’s army was suffering tremendous casualties in Russia meaning that Great Britain would soon be able to shift resources from the Napoleonic wars in Europe to the battles in America. With more resources to put towards the American war, the British navy bulked up its forces considerably and blockaded many of America's ports. As a result many ships could not safely leave port, nor could they enter. Besides limiting the nation's navy, this action also had a drastic effect on America’s trade market. Supplies had difficulty getting in and out and the national government, which largely depended on trade taxes for funding, found itself once again strapped for funds.

Americans could take heart that their army had gotten better and they were not as out skilled as before, but they still did not surge ahead. Pride may have been restored but victory was nowhere near. As Napoleon’s power continued to diminish, Britain sent more troops and

140 Compared to British frigates, the American ships were larger, more heavily armored, and had more guns. Manning British warships was a continual problem for the empire which led to the contentious point of impressments. They seldom had boats that were fully manned, and many of the men onboard were often not trained sailors. Conversely, the United States, with far fewer ships to man, tended to have fuller, more competent crews. The British often argued that many of the American sailors were actually English, an argument not without merit that will be brought up again later.

141 The Morning Chronicle (London, England), December 26, 1812; Issue 13616.
supplies for the American war. This was bad news for American forces. Really, the only plus at this point for the new country was that their land army had gotten better since the beginning of the war. They had more experience and were more prepared for battle. The bad news was that there would be a lot more British soldiers to battle.

Despite the ongoing war with Great Britain, the American theatre was still marked by its dependence on the British. Throughout the buildup to the war and the war itself, newspapers gave an intriguing juxtaposition on America’s relationship to Great Britain. In a single newspaper, and sometime on a single page there would be articles detailing the progress of the war or imminent dangers of the war, and advertisements for plays that were newly arrived from London or a big hit on the English stage. One such example comes from The Rhode-Island American [see fig. 5]. The article on the left relays reports and concerns of the British Navy amassing on the Chesapeake Bay near the capitol. The advertisement on the right invites readers to the theatre where they can see a British play that London audiences loved. Politically, England was set up as the country’s enemy, but culturally (especially in the theatre) Great Britain was presented as being superior and something to aspire to. The message was the cultured audiences of London appreciated this work, so it should be more than good enough for the theatre spectators of America. This speaks to the not yet fully formed ideal of the American identity. As a nation the United States was attempting to reinforce its separation from Great Britain, but that break was far less definitive in terms of culture. There were many attempts to champion a uniquely American voice, for example Royall Tyler’s with The Contrast, but almost immediately there were opposing actions, like Barker’s play being billed as the work of an Englishman, that counteracted the move towards a more definitive American culture.
And what of the amassing of British ships along the Chesapeake? The British strengthened their blockade of the American coastline and began raiding towns on or near the coast. Eventually they went after the capital, which seemed to catch the American government off guard. They did not mount much of a defense and what defense they had was quickly out-powered and out-maneuvered. Many of Washington's public buildings were set on fire including the capital building and the White House. While much of the town had already been evacuated, having the capital torched was quite a black-eye for the nation. The British did not wish to hold the capital; they merely burned it, likely in retribution for the Americans inflicting damage on their Canadian properties.

While Washington was an utter disaster for the Americans, they fared much better in their defense of Baltimore. The city was more prepared than the capital and had been planning its defense. They were well armed and manned and had built fortifications. This battle brought about one of the most culturally significant elements of the war. What was to become the national anthem more than a hundred years later was written after seeing the battle. In reality, the United States had not gained anything in the battle; they had just prevented a city from being invaded. Their success was defensive, nothing was gained they just kept what they already had. Nonetheless, this was a boost for American morale and would cause great pride for years to come. In a way, this battle was a microcosm of the war as a whole. The war was less about the actualities of what physically happened and more about the psychological effect of the war. The United States did not really improve its situation by battling Great Britain, but the ability to stand up to the European power and not completely crumble served to give the nation a further feeling of independence. The country had finally established that it was a separate entity capable of national defense and holding its own with other nations in the world. That was the key cultural
element gained from the war and not the fact that America did not really achieve any of the professed goals of the war. The United States did not take over Canada or drive the British out of the continent. The country’s actions also did not affect British maritime laws or behavior. Most positive movement on that front had little to nothing to do with the battles between the two nations. That is not to say that there was not a tangible profit to the war. At best they reached a tie through their battles with the British, but in related skirmishes the American forces expanded West by fighting American Indian tribes and taking their land as well as Spanish territory. One of America’s claims before and during the war was that the British were encouraging the American Indians to attack the country’s European Americans. [see fig. 6] In his message to Congress on the war, Madison drew a direct correlation between increased hostile American Indian actions and British interference. Mainly, it served as an opportunity for America to attack American Indian land and expand.

While the United States government was on the brink of war with Great Britain, American Indian tribes had concerns of their own. In addition to the constant European expansion, there were many conflicts between and within tribes often having to do with how to deal with European settlers. One of the most intense conflicts was within the Creek tribe and expanded into a battle with the American military. The Creek War is sometimes considered a conflict separate from the War of 1812, but because of the United States government’s concern

\[142\] Madison stated that, “In reviewing the conduct of Great Britain toward the United States, our attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare, just renewed by the savages, on one of our extensive frontiers; a warfare which is known to spare neither age nor sex, and to be distinguished by features peculiarly shocking to humanity. It is difficult to account for the activity and combinations which have for some time been developing themselves among tribes in constant intercourse with British traders and garrisons, without connecting their hostility with that influence, and without recollecting the authenticated examples of such interpositions, heretofore furnished by the officers and agents of that government.” \textit{Annals of Congress}, 12\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1st sess., 1628.
that the British were involved in Indian uprisings it is inextricably linked.\textsuperscript{143} This part of the war is being brought up in part because of the involvement of Andrew Jackson. Jackson would prove to be the most enduring figure from the war and in many ways serves as a symbol of American culture and a model for the perceived “ideal” American character type.

Jackson defeated the hostile tribes and expanded the United States south and west. At the end of the conflict of the Creek War, Jackson had the tribes, including the friendly tribes that had fought with the American military, sign over much of their land.\textsuperscript{144} He would also march into Spanish controlled Florida to fight the British and further expand the United States’ borders. In fact, Jackson played a key role in the main expansions that came about during the war. In one of the biggest battles of the war,\textsuperscript{145} he absolutely annihilated the British at New Orleans. This is a sign of what really came out of the war. In their battles against Great Britain, America at best reached a tie, but the nation does expand, not into Canada, but through Native American land. The country expands west and south, not north. Jackson would proceed to be very influential, not only militarily and politically, but to the culture at large. He would serve as a model of many of the attributes ascribed to American identity; a man with seemingly inbred knowledge or common sense, who was not an over-educated careful thinker, but a straightforward man of action.

The rise of Jackson was not a cultural aberration, but a marker of a growing trend in the United States. The appreciation of common sense was a long held value in America, but more

\textsuperscript{143} It should be noted that this refers to the Creek War from 1813-14. There was another conflict that occured in 1836.

\textsuperscript{144} The Treaty of Fort Jackson was signed August 9, 1814 and gave the United States large portions of present day Alabama and Georgia. Robert Vincent Remini, \textit{The Battle Of New Orleans} (New York, N.Y: Viking, 1999) 15.

\textsuperscript{145} The Battle of New Orleans happened after Great Britain ratified the Treaty of Ghent (December 27, 1815), but before the United States Senate ratified the agreement. However, due to the slow nature of communication between countries that are separated by an ocean, neither of the armies were aware of the war’s impending end. The war was not over until the US ratified the agreement in (February 16, 1815), but the terms of the peace were already set. Despite the battle having no impact on the terms of the settlement, it was one of the most remembered battles and celebrated by the United States. Donald R Hickey, \textit{Glorious Victory: Andrew Jackson and the Battle of New Orleans} (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015) 127-128.
frequently it was being championed in regards to what it was not. The rise of anti-intellectualism
in the 1800s and the connection to dramatic character types (the shift away from the truewit to
the man of common sense and action) mirrors what was happening on the American political
scene. Wit, higher education, and intellectualism were a signifier of class. To be highly educated
and of obvious wit was a sign of elitism and a separation from the common man. The common
man gains popularity over the intellectual, but this does not really equal egalitarianism, for this is
still a system of social hierarchy. Looking at The Contrast’s Manly, one sees a character who is
not an intellectual, but he is a white landowner with a fundamental education. He is no truewit,
but he is also not the average American.

Denigration of being learned was not unique to the character types. The idea of having
common sense was more valued in general society than being intellectual or educated. This can
be seen through examples in politics as well as dramatic literature. While this idea had long been
a popular notion in the American consciousness, one has to only think of Thomas Paine's treatise
on the topic, it was becoming more prevalent. One just needs to look at the perception of the
presidents to see the gradual change in the ideal American character. Many of the first presidents
were of an aristocratic background and received the best educations offered in the country.\textsuperscript{146}
They were noted and respected for their intellect. However in public opinions, a gradual change
in the attitudes about these men and what they represent can begin to be seen. John Quincy
Adams was often the object of ridicule because of his education and academic
interests.\textsuperscript{147} Perhaps of more interest was the changing perception of Thomas Jefferson. During

\textsuperscript{146} Washington is the exception here having little formal education. Jefferson and Monroe attended William and
Mary, Madison went to Princeton, and both Adams went to Harvard. See, Richard Hofstadter, \textit{Anti-intellectualism
In American Life} (New York: Knopf, 1963) particularly chapter 6, “The Decline of the Gentleman” for an
examination on the perception of educated leaders.

\textsuperscript{147} Adams had the additional negative of receiving much of his early education abroad while travelling with his
father before he attended Harvard University. Hofstadter, 157-58.
stretches of his political career Jefferson was a popular figure who garnered much respect, but the creep of anti-intellectualism really started to build momentum with a backlash against him. It is not unusual for any politician to have negative feedback, but the nature of much of his is particularly interesting because of his political tenets. One of the key components to Jeffersonian-Republicanism is an agrarian society and the working man in the form of a small scale farmer. Democratic-Republicans favored state's rights and were fearful of an aristocratical running of the country. They were concerned with Federalists championing a stronger federal government and being too closely connected to Great Britain. Despite the party line of fearing the power of the elite class and wanting power with the "common" man, Jefferson was judged for his seemingly elite nature. There are many things that signal that Jefferson was not a common laboring man, nor did he want to be, but it was not his wealth, power, or property holdings that raised concerns, it was his education and intellectual interests. There was a growing sentiment that a good leader did not need an extensive education, but good old common sense and natural know how. In fact, too much education could be a bad thing.

Despite his fairly impressive track record of being a political leader, his abilities were questioned because of his scholarly inclinations. At the turn of the century, a pamphlet questioning Jefferson’s ability to be the president was published. The author, a South Carolina congressman, noted that Jefferson’s “merits might entitle him to the professorship of a college, but they would be incompatible with the duties of the presidency as with the command of the

148 Small scale here differentiates between a family farm and a slave holding plantation. Despite the fact that Jefferson had a large plantation and owned slaves, his political philosophies were geared to land owning farmers with small farms and few to no slaves.

149 Hofstadter, 146-47

150 Hofstadter, 154-55
Western army.” He continued stating, “the characteristic traits of a philosopher, when he turns politician, are, timidity, whimsicalness, a disposition to reason from certain principles, and not from the true nature of man.”\textsuperscript{151} The basic conceit of the argument is that the country does not need a thinker, but a doer; a man of action. Despite Jefferson’s professed views on the primacy of the common man, he was not the model of the common man and concerns about an intellectual elite emerged. These fears continued to grow and came to a head during the age of Jackson.

The anti-intellectual sentiments in early America were not just born of a dislike of learning, but from a want of it. Education at every level was a clear mark of class with those having attended institutions like Harvard, or other universities, at the top of the social pyramid. The basic education system in the country’s early years was severely lacking with many of the population receiving little to no instruction. The distrust of higher education and of overly intellectual pursuits was understandable given that it was out of the reach of the majority. There was a split between the concepts of basic and higher education with distrust of those with higher knowledge and of knowledge of things that were not obviously practical. While so many were going without a basic education, receiving a prestigious university education seemed like an unnecessary luxury.

In the 1800s the idea of college was not necessarily to bring about new thought and ideas, but as an implementation of a "common culture."\textsuperscript{152} Education was a dividing point between the classes with the upper class seen as being over educated by the lower class and the lower class

\textsuperscript{151} William Loughton Smith, \textit{The Pretentions of Thomas Jefferson to the Presidency Examined: and the Charges Against John Adams Refuted: Addressed to the citizens of America in General and Particularly to the Electors of the President}, United States, 1796, 22.

admittedly being under educated. What was important in the minds of the poor class for an education was quite different than what the upper class saw fit. Education gave the upper and middle classes a sense of common culture, but the lower classes, not just economically, anyone outside the white male power structure, were sorely undereducated. They were in want of basic knowledge and literacy, and were also placed outside the constructed idea of American culture.

An essay written by a farmer in 1798 gives an interesting view on education and its effect on the populace. William Manning sees higher education as a scheme by the upper class to keep the educated out of the labor class. His view is that the upper class are not learning anything important or practical, so they are of little use to the nation. Basic education is more limited and restricts the class mobility of less powerful portions of the population. He specifically mentions women as being part of the population that is oppressed by the few with power and are often denied adequate education. Members of the upper class know that they could be easily outnumbered and work to keep an intellectual and financial advantage to stay in power by subjugating the less educated laboring class.

Many of the examples Manning used still resonate with the class wars that are present in America today. Essentially, he explains how the one percent feed off of the population by stating, “foron manufactoryes may be cheapest at first cost but not in the long run. Marchents may grow rich on the ruens of our mecanicks & manufactoryes, & bring us into as bad a condition as we ware in 1786, they look ondly to their own interests.” Manning’s aim is to level the playing field. The lower classes would receive basic education and the upper classes

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153 William Manning, The Key of Libberty: Showing the Causes why a Free Government has Always Failed, and a Remidy Against It (Billerica, Mass.: Manning Association, 1922). There is no knowledge of the piece being published in its own time, but was published after the fact when it was discovered in the family’s papers.

154 The spelling errors are Manning’s own and have been left intact as his point is the country’s various and disproportionate levels of education. The fact that Manning can write, even with nonstandard spelling, indicates that he is not on the bottom of the class pyramid.
would not reach for higher levels of academia. The education of the upper class would merely serve as preparation to give basic instruction to the lower class children and everyone would exist in a more level, but also it would seem, mediocre playing field. These thoughts were not uncommon with many in the lower classes and it stands to reason. They were impoverished not only of money, but of basic education as well. However, this overlooked the danger of a society and culture not moving forward. The distrust of higher education was an understandable idea given that some were trying to fix an immediate pressing need and not looking to the future. These thoughts encapsulate some of the core reasons why intellectualism and wit were looked down upon. With this in mind, it becomes clearer as to why the American public would embrace the straightforward bumpkin character rather than the truewit. It also gives an idea to the scope of people that viewed themselves as an average person, or the common man: poor farmers to the third president of the United States.

While the war with Great Britain did not bring many obvious returns, the British retained Canada and maintained maritime power; it did bring forth a change in the United States. Despite the war being a draw, or more accurately because the Americans had managed a draw, they had gained international respect and a new feeling of independence. So how did this reinvigorated feeling of nationalism affect the theatre? In the decade before the war there was a definite preference for foreign works and even during the war there was a steady stream of European plays and actors. After the war there was a more definite split culturally between the United States and England, but that was not altogether positive for American authors or characters.

America was now seen as a separate entity from England. The young country had a separate identity, an identity where the more established English character was recognized as being more cultured. America and the American identity were young and not given much credit
for being able to create great artistic works. During this period, many American playwrights continued to resort to English pseudonyms and writing English types as a means to gain respectability. Not that those actions were always about respectability. European and particularly English authors were frequently in vogue and to be an American was not only not an advantage, but also a definite strike against a play and an author. At times, managers would even proclaim that a play was the work of an English author instead of an American just on the hopes of improving the box office.

After America’s second war of independence, there remained an odd juxtaposition between strong feelings of nationalism along with the still present distaste for native theatre. It would seem that being an American playwright focusing upon American customs and manners would be a positive, but in practice it was usually beneficial to be European. Nationalism did not fully extend into the theatre. There were a fair number of patriotic plays and pageants, but they were seldom more than spectacle and were often short pieces. Full length plays were predominately European. There were many plays straight from the London stage and numerous translations from the European continent. While American theatre was lagging behind, the development or perpetuation of American identity did not stop. Authors in other fields continued to embrace certain features in their characters that embodied the created idea of an American. The Romantic period fit in well to the America myth from James Fennimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels featuring an independent, nature loving, self-sufficient hero, to Henry David Thoreau’s philosophical works which also highlighted a straightforward practicality. It would be some time before American works were a mainstay in the theatre canon.

*The Contrast* was an example of native pride being expressed and an American work being embraced. It would take many years for another American manners comedy to take off,
but it occurred again with Anna Cora Mowatt’s *Fashion*. When looking at these two works together, one of the most interesting aspects is not only what has changed in society, but what has remained the same. The main focus in the play, as in *The Contrast*, is upon Americans adopting European customs instead of embracing their own culture. The heroes of the piece embrace their Americanness, while the majority of the characters are made to look foolish because of their put on airs. *Fashion* is more satirical than *The Contrast* and every character has a harsher light shone upon them. This more critical depiction no doubt had to do with changes in America, and with a playwright who was in a unique position to experience a wider spectrum of society.

Mowatt was from a wealthy family and married a successful and established husband. Both her connection to her father and husband assured her a high place in society. Because of financial failures and persistent health issues, she also knew what it was like to be in want and have to earn a living. Before *Fashion*, Mowatt worked on the lecture circuit and gave public readings of poetry. Part of the draw for the audience was watching a woman of such elite stature perform. Theatre and performance had lost some of its stigma over the years, but for a wellborn woman to perform in public was an anomaly and somewhat shocking. In addition to her readings, she churned out a lot of writing of various forms under her own name and multiple pseudonyms to keep money coming into the family.\(^{155}\) This was spurred by her husband’s financial failures stemming from the financial crash of 1837 that affected much of America for years to come.

After recovering from the war and a financial downturn in 1819, America’s economy flourished, but in 1837 a series of events lead to a financial collapse that not only took its toll on

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\(^{155}\) Anna Cora Ogden Mowatt Ritchie, *Autobiography of an Actress; Or, Eight Years on the Stage* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, And Fields, 1854) 185.
Mowatt’s family, but on the majority of the country. With embargos lifted and relations restored with Great Britain, trade was booming in the United States. Cotton production grew tremendously, and a majority of it was sent to Great Britain.\textsuperscript{156} To increase production of the cash crop, plantations needed a larger work force so the slave population in the country grew exponentially. Between 1820 and 1840 the census shows a growth of nearly a million people in the slave population.\textsuperscript{157} Economic growth was not just limited to the South. The rest of the country flourished by producing food and manufactured goods for the slave work force. Areas of the country outside the South claimed to be above the use of slave labor and looked down upon the practice, but that did not stop them from profiting off their work. It is important to remember that since Great Britain was the buyer for much of the cotton crop, America’s economy was once again dependent on its former ruler. The circumstances of control were different from before, but this illustrates the myth of America and Americans being totally independent and self-sufficient.

People were buying land at an alarming rate expecting to make a profit, and many did for a time. But like America’s recent real estate bubble, the escalation of buying land and selling it for a profit reached its peak and came crashing down; flipping America if you will.\textsuperscript{158} The

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\item \textsuperscript{156} Charles H. Evans, United States House of Representatives, \textit{Exports, domestic and foreign, from the American colonies to Great Britain, from 1697 to 1789, inclusive. Exports, domestic, from the United States to all countries, from 1789 to 1883, inclusive}, 48th Cong. 1st sess., Misc. Doc. 49 part 2, Washington: GPO, 1884, pg. 28-9.
\item \textsuperscript{157} Social Explorer Dataset, “Census 1820, 1830, 1840” Digitally transcribed by Inter-university Consortium for political and Social Research, edited, verified by Michael Haines, compiled, edited and verified by Social Explorer. The Slave population in 1820: 1,538,038, in 1830: 2,009,043, and 1840: 2,487,444.
\item \textsuperscript{158} The purchase of public land had remained steady for several years, but began to increase in the 1830s and then grew exponentially in 1835 and 1836 with 1836 being over quadruple the amount of land sold in 1834. See, Aaron M. Sakolski, \textit{The Great American Land Bubble: The Amazing Story of Land-Grabbing, Speculations, and Booms from Colonial Days to the Present Time} (New York & London: Harper & Bros, 1932). Theoretically, this brought a substantial increase in income into the government, but not in actuality. With a general lack of specie in the government paired with a booming economy, most land was bought on bank bills and credit. This large increase prompted President Jackson to create the specie circular or the currency act, which required public land to be bought with specie rather than bank notes. \textit{Register of Debates}, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, 107-08 (1836). For a detailed
\end{itemize}
parallels to the two downturns are strikingly similar. Banks leant out more money than they should have and to people who could not afford it.

Part of the fall can be ascribed to the United States government’s economic policies. Jackson’s pressure on the National Bank and its eventual failing created a domino effect. Jackson had federal funds reinvested into state banks; state banks that were no longer kept in check by the federal bank. Not surprisingly, those banks over leant. The collapse was not just due to the happenings in America. As stated before, the United States was not a self-sustaining entity, but relied upon other nations as well. Great Britain fueled much of the economic growth. With France and its allies on the losing end of the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain was now the world’s foremost superpower. Their good economic times lead to their purchase of mass amounts of cotton which in part lead to the American rush for real estate. The Bank of England was also guilty of over lending. The bank did not leave themselves big enough reserves, which forced them to tighten up their credit. Additionally, while Americans were speculating on land, the British were speculating on America. All of the parties were dealing with more money than was in actual existence and it eventually reached a breaking point.


159 Resistance to having a national bank had been present since the country’s earliest days. The bank was the idea of Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists and had long been hated by the state’s rights leaning Democratic-Republicans who thought that it gave the federal government too much power. For more information on the national bank and U.S. banking history see, Edward S. Kaplan, The Bank Of The United States And The American Economy (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999) and Howard Bodenhorn, A History Of Banking In Antebellum America: Financial Markets And Economic Development In An Era Of Nation-building (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

160 Alasdair Roberts, America’s First Great Depression: Economic Crisis And Political Disorder After The Panic Of 1837 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). This study gives a good overview of the crash. Roberts is among many scholars that argue that Great Britain played a key role in the American economy’s collapse and that the event was not just self-contained.
Many of the economic problems hinged on the lack of a solid currency. People were dealing in credit and bank notes. Public land offices would no longer take bank bills and required hard money. In turn, people drew this real money out of banks and greatly lowered American bank reserves in a short amount of time. The federal government was also moving its deposits around which also depleted specie in areas of the country. While all of this was happening, the demand for cotton dropped and with it the price of cotton fell. This meant not only that Americans were making less off of their primary crop, but they also had less money to pay back their domestic and English creditors. With creditors on both sides of the Atlantic tightening up their rates, businesses could not get credit and they needed credit because the value of their crops had plummeted and they were now operating at a loss. There was bankruptcy and ruin for many businesses. The domino effect continued. One business would go under, that business had credit with another business and that business would never see that money. That cycle would continue. There were runs on banks until they refused to exchange specie for their notes.

There was a brief bounce back in the economy in 1838, but weather affected English crops which forced them into more than their usual importations. In turn, the Bank of England once again ratcheted up its interest rates, and much to their horror, had to borrow money from France.

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161 The United States did not begin to establish a national currency until 1861.

162 1837 into 1838 were harsh winters in Great Britain. The temperature was below average, and there are various reports (newspapers, letters, memoirs, etc.) of unsuccessful crops and dying livestock. For data sets of historical English temperatures see: United Kingdom, Met Office, Met Office Hadley Centre Observations Datasets, Web.

The charter for the Second Bank of the United States was not renewed and in 1836 the former central bank operated as a Pennsylvania state bank. This only added to the financial strains of the country and the bank struggled and finally failed completely in 1841.\textsuperscript{164} It was not the only bank that failed as an estimated two hundred banks in the country had failed over the course of the economic collapse. \textsuperscript{165} The lack of money and credit made any sort of business dealings very difficult which made recovery difficult. The British economy was also in decline so their credit was not available. The British were no longer buying vast amounts of cotton. Poor weather lead to poor crops which meant that the British now needed to spend more money on imported food, money that previously could have gone to textile goods.

How does this affect American identity and what does it have to do with \textit{Fashion}? People at the top of the pyramid had the power to eventually make more money and take advantage of those who were faltering. Living up to the American identity meant making more of yourself, to be an independent individual, but the people at the top of the pyramid did not really want everyone on the same level, just for people to strive for something they would likely never reach all the while financing their recovery. Many land speculators had wealth and monopolized the sale of land. While they also lost money, they would buy the best plots of land, mark up the prices, and what was left for poorer portions of the population was upcharged, less desirable land. There is more than a bit of illusion in the identity that is being promoted. Being an American and owning your own land; being your own man.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{164}There was a long battle between pro-bank and anti-bank factions in the country. President Jackson had vowed to shut down the federal bank and after a long struggle and vetoing charters, he succeeded.

\textsuperscript{165}\textit{Niles' National Register} and \textit{Hunt's Merchants' Magazine} are both excellent sources for contemporary coverage and statistics on the financial crisis, keeping track of banks’ suspension of species, financial holdings, and failures.

\textsuperscript{166}I specify man, because so far the American identity is limited to men, white men.
People in the upper class were not without problems in the harsh economic times. There was a great embarrassment caused by states defaulting to their European lenders.\textsuperscript{167} They were losing pride in being American. The American identity had been tainted and the cracks in its construction could be seen. These faults in the American character can be seen in the more satirical moments in \textit{Fashion’s} take on America’s manners. Because of her husband’s financial losses, Mowatt needed to make money to keep the family afloat. She would eventually become a successful actress, but before that she tried her hand at playwriting. The result was America's best and most popular example of a manners play in the 19th century.\textsuperscript{168} The play shows the country's continued movement to anti-intellectualism, the still present encroachment of foreign culture, and contains the ever increasing presence of racialized characters.

\textit{Fashion} takes place within the house of Mrs. Tiffany, a woman obsessed with foreign customs. She and her husband come from modest beginnings (a fact that she tries to conceal) but her husband's success has given them a different social circle. As she would say, they are now a part of the "New York ee-light." The family lives well beyond their means and Mrs. Tiffany rejects American manners in an attempt to seem more cultured. As in most manners plays, secret identities and misunderstandings ensue. Mr. Tiffany is being blackmailed. Mrs. Tiffany wants her daughter to marry a Count she has become acquainted with; he is of course a fake. In trying to prove that the Count is a fraud, the actions of the virtuous governess are misunderstood and she is judged and cast out. But wait, a letter proves that the governess is innocent and in the

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\item Eight states and one territory defaulted on their debts: Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and the Florida territory.
\item While the show did not receive the best reviews, it was noted by most critics that it was popular with audiences. Theatre critic Edgar Allen Poe frequently commented on the popularity of the show, and while he found many faults with the play, he went to every show in its original run. Despite his negative critics, Poe did state that, “Comparatively, there is much merit in \textit{Fashion}, and in many respects (and those of a telling character) it is superior to any American play.” \textit{Broadway Journal}, March 29, 1845, pg. 203.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
process it is learned that a rich old man is really her grandfather and she is an heiress. In brief, things are neatly wrapped up, but serious questions remain.

The issues addressed in *The Contrast*, namely Americans affecting foreign manners, continue in *Fashion* (1845). The Jonathan character flourished, but the country bumpkin was not just the Jonathan character. The central, American figure in manners plays still took on more of the country bumpkin’s finer attributes. Some of the more foolish qualities of the type were shifted onto characters outside the dominant racial and ethnic background. Increasingly, this was done with black characters who seldom retained the same innate cleverness as the white characters of a similar type had.

In earlier American works much of the population was erased or barely acknowledged, but the new century brought a wider scope. However, the depiction of people outside the power base was often less than flattering. In the first scene, Mowatt presents a black character who is the Tiffany’s new servant.\footnote{While the character is black, I should note that the actors who portrayed him were white and appeared in blackface. George Skerrett, a British actor that made his career in North America, originated the role. George Clinton Densmore Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, Vol. 5 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-49). Franklin Graham, *Histrionic Montreal: Annals of the Montreal Stage, With Biographical and Critical Notices Of The Plays And Players Of A Century* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1902) 94.} The character of Zeke does have some positive characteristics, but overall the character is meant to be a fool. Zeke is a minstrel character.\footnote{Zeke was referred to as a “Jim Crow” character in contemporary reviews, “The New Comedy at the Park Last Night,” *The New York Herald*, (New York; New York) March 25, 1845, pg. 2.} While minstrelsy was quite popular by this time in America, minstrel characters were usually in their own shows or in short burlesques. Zeke is of particular interest to this study because he shows a shifting of character traits. At his core, Zeke is a country bumpkin type, but he is not embraced in the same way that the type had been in the United States. In comparison to other American versions of the type, Zeke has a disproportionate number of the negative traits of the bumpkin type without the positive characteristics. The positive aspects of the bumpkin have been absorbed into the
American character and the negative traits are being shifted onto racialized characters. Zeke is an example of this shifting.

As in Tyler’s play, the alteration of the types and the further development of an American character can be seen. Again, there is no truewit to be found. Instead, the hero of the piece is found in a bluff American type who is a kind of Jonathan and Colonel Manly combination. He will save the day like Manly and truewit characters, but he has more obvious country bumpkin characteristics than Manly does. The character of Adam Trueman is a country farmer in the twilight of his years who has come to the city to visit his friend Tiffany, and inspect his secret granddaughter.

Like all country bumpkins, Trueman is an outsider. In this case the play takes place in New York City, and he is from Cattaraugus, a county in rural New York. Just like Sir Wilfull in The Way of the World, Trueman’s outsider status and connection to the country can be immediately established by his appearance. Mowatt gives specific costume instructions for each of the character’s scenes. What they wear is indicative of who they are. In his first scene, Trueman is to wear “a farmer's rough overcoat, coarse blue trousers, heavy boots, broad-brimmed hat, dark coloured neckerchief, stout walking stick, large bandanna tied loosely around his neck”. In his first scene Sir Wilfull is taunted for wearing travelling clothes and dirty boots. However, there is a difference in the pieces on who is the fool. Both characters speak out on the evils of affected manners, but the plays treat them differently. In The Way of the World, Sir Wilfull is clearly a buffoon; a well-meaning, likeable buffoon, but a buffoon none the less. Trueman is seldom the most foolish person in a scene and serves to point out how foolish the people in Tiffany’s society are. For example, while having a conversation with Mrs. Tiffany,

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Trueman comments, “Fashion! And pray what is fashion, madam? An agreement between certain persons to live without using their souls! to substitute etiquette for virtue—decorum for purity—manners for morals! to affect a shame for the works of their Creator! and expend all their rapture upon the works of their tailors and dressmakers!” (pg. 39; 4.1). Obviously she does not agree with the sentiment, but throughout the play Mowatt has made it clear that Mrs. Tiffany is meant to be a fool. This is most obvious in her obsession with French manners and her pretentious use of and butchery of the language. In response to Trueman’s views on fashion, she states what she does not like about him, that he is, “quite rustic, and deplorably American!” (pg. 39; 4.1). Given how terrible Mrs. Tiffany’s opinions are throughout the play, one suspects that Trueman should be liked because he is so American. That is not to say that Trueman is not the target of some humor. Fashion is a harsher satire than The Contrast and as such it also takes aim at some of the ideals it is championing. While the overall message is pro-American and lambasting those who adopt foreign manners, Mowatt also shines a light on the false ideas and bravado of American ideals.

Naturally, Trueman is a champion for freedom and independence, so it is not surprising when he states his dislike for liveries, “To make men wear the badge of servitude in a free land—that's the fashion, is it? Hurrah, for republican simplicity!” (pg. 13; 1.1). However, Trueman refers to the man wearing the uniform as “grinning nigger” throughout the play and treats him not as a man but as a base being (pg. 13; 1.1). Trueman is not the only character guilty of this slight, but as he is the character that is representative of an American, and the hero of the piece, it has a greater effect. America may profess and even aspire to be a land of freedom, but that freedom is limited to a small percentage of the country’s population.
As in *The Contrast, Fashion* also deals with women as chattel. While the female characters still need the help of men, the fact that they are being treated like objects is addressed in the play. Perhaps because the author was a woman who took agency and wrote a play because of her husband’s financial difficulties, she was aware of her own standing as a second-class citizen. There are many foolish characters in the play, and Mrs. Tiffany may be the most foolish, so for her to be treated as such is not remarkable. What is more revealing is how the character of Gertrude is treated, particularly by characters that are not strictly fools. Gertrude is the governess for the Tiffany’s daughter and unbeknownst to her, the granddaughter of Trueman. Amongst a sea of foreign fashions, Gertrude is shown to be practical, straightforward, honest, and states that she has “a love of independence!” (pg. 20; 2.2). She immediately can tell that the Count is a snake, risks her own reputation to save her charge, and proudly proclaims that she is “an American!” (pg. 22; 2.2). Basically, Gertrude possesses the good tenets of an American. Her positive character traits are noted by Trueman throughout the play. After a conversation with her, he says to himself, “If falsehood harbours there, I'll give up searching after truth!” (pg. 25; 2.2)

Despite Gertrude being unaware that Trueman is her grandfather, he did have a hand in how she was raised. After her mother’s death while she was just an infant, Trueman sent her off to be raised by relatives believing that his wealth would be a burden to her development. His instructions were to have "her taught true independence--she had hands--capacities--and should use them!” (pg. 54; 5.1). Clearly he wanted her to be honest and independent and by his own judgment, she has turned out that way. However, he does not see her as a full citizen and takes it upon himself to make decisions for her. When speaking to Colonel Howard, the man Gertrude fancies, Trueman states, “Gertrude's yours! There--never say a word, man--don't bore me with
your thanks--you can cancel all obligations by making that child happy! There--take her!” (pg. 55; 5.1). He means well and chooses the most suitable mate for his granddaughter, but he diminishes her independence. She was raised to be more independent and an individual, but as a woman she was still property and treated as such. A marriage or a proposal is the standard in the genre, so Gertrude being paired off is de rigueur, but how Mowatt comes to that point is interesting. Trueman is the representative of the American character and she gives him dialogue that makes it explicitly clear that Gertrude is property. Whether it was her intent or not, Mowatt uses Trueman to point out the inequity in American society. To be a true American is still limited to being a white affluent male.

There is a strong focus on financial matters throughout the play. Part of what makes up the American character is having money. This is where the central American character in manners plays is most like a truewit.172 Though the character is mainly an idealized bumpkin, in his possession of a fortune he is very much like the truewit and possesses similar societal privilege. While both Colonel Manly and Trueman are simple rustics, they both have sizeable fortunes. What’s more, neither one of them chased after money they just have money. Trueman comments that he “never coveted wealth--yet twenty years ago I found myself the richest farmer in Catteraugus” (pg. 53; 5.1). The majority of the other characters in Fashion are chasing after money or spending money they do not have. Mrs. Tiffany spends until her husband is on the brink of bankruptcy, Mr. Tiffany commits forgery to keep money coming in, the Count is using a false identity to connive people out of money, and Mr. Tiffany’s clerk is blackmailing him for money. Mowatt is making a comment on the danger of capitalism in the American culture and how poor judgment can have a trickledown effect on society. In an argument with his wife,

172 While truewits are sometimes on the hunt for money, they live and operate in an affluent class and have access to privileges and credit that a person of a lower class would not have.
Tiffany is complaining about all of their bills, but she thinks it is unnecessary for them to pay their debts and gives several examples of other supposedly wealthy people not paying their bills. Her reasoning is that they must keep spending to keep up appearances so that they can continue to get credit. While he is stealing money to get by, Tiffany is aware enough to realize the flaw in his wife’s and many people’s system. Mrs. Tiffany comments that “the honor of their invaluable patronage is sufficient for the persons they employ!” while Mr. Tiffany asks, “Patronage then is a newly invented food upon which the working classes fatten? What convenient appetites poor people must have!” (pg. 51; 5.1). While the rich took losses in the Panic of 1837 and other times of economic struggle, their losses pale in comparison to what the poor have to deal with. The wealthy lose face; the poor are hungry.

While Mowatt acknowledges and shows sympathy for the financially less fortunate, there is more than that to be taken from the play. One should not desperately work to attain money. One should work hard and be practical. The sentiment is that the Tiffanys would be better off if Mrs. Tiffany was still a milliner and Mr. Tiffany was still a traveling salesman. In other words, stay in your place. As merchants gained wealth, they climbed the social ladder. New to their perch on top of the economic scale, they often sought some way to belong with more "established" families. They wanted a kind of instant refinement and culture. This sometimes entailed trips to Europe and generally trying to adopt foreign customs. In *Fashion*, the play's admonition of the new rich reinforces the concept of American identity as being practical, moderate, and full of common sense by wanting merchants that are beginning to acquire wealth to behave in a moderate and tasteful manner. At the same time, this play that satirizes those that have gained social standing and become affected reinforces the high social standings of the people that already had power and money. It decries the idea of instating an aristocracy or class
system in America while at the same time reinforcing the one that is already in existence. For the author's part, this is not necessarily done on purpose, but that is the power of the system, it is not always seen, but is always felt. The ideal American character must be rich, but cannot be ostentatious or obvious in achieving wealth.

On the positive side, through Trueman the concept of an American as being honest and to the point is demonstrated. Like most bumpkins, Trueman is able to see a person’s true characteristics despite what they have to say. When visiting Tiffany at work, he notices right away his friend’s unhappiness despite assurances that he is quite well: “It's many a long day since you were happy at anything!” (pg. 17; 2.1). During his visit, he also makes an accurate and blunt assessment of Tiffany’s clerk stating that “he looks for all the world like a spy--the most inquisitorial, hang-dog face--ugh! the sight of it makes my blood run cold!” (pg. 19; 2.1). What Trueman does not know, but would not be surprised to find out, is that the clerk is blackmailing Tiffany. He is also immediately suspicious of Count Jolimaitre, who is really a cook, upon their first meeting.

Trueman also manages to right America’s historical wrongs in a figurative way when he solves everybody’s problems at the end of the play. He agrees to pay off past debts and fund new business with the agreement that everyone make amends for their mistakes. Looking back at the Panic of 1837, Americans were not the only ones hit hard by the depression. The British invested heavily in America (high risk, high gain) and when people, businesses, and entire states defaulted, many British investors took large financial losses. As a result, many Brits commented on the dishonest, untrustworthiness of the American; characteristics that went directly against the American idealized sense of self. In his travel log, American Notes, Charles Dickens visits an area of land that was greatly invested in and notes that it was “vaunted in England as a mine of
Golden Hope, and speculated in, on the faith of monstrous representations, to many people’s ruin.”173 Cairo, Illinois was sold in England as a great opportunity and advantageous area of land, but was in actuality, as Dickens put it, “a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise.”174 In the *Examiner*, Sydney Smith warned America over its debts that “you have no conception of the obloquy and contempt to which you are exposing yourselves all over Europe” and questioned the American character, “I cannot shut my eyes to enormous dishonesty; nor, remembering their former state, can I restrain myself from calling on them (though I copy Satan) to spring up from the gulph of infamy in which they are rolling.”175 Smith, who had invested in the United States, went on to say in another article, “their [America’s] people have tasted of the dangerous luxury of dishonesty, and they will never be brought back to the homely rule of right.”176 Smith had lost money and was none too pleased, but his sentiments were not uncommon.

American newspapers commented on foreign opinions of American debt and character and the negative sentiments were well known. The character of Trueman acts to counter those ideas. Righting the debts of the other characters is a way to reaffirm the positive American character traits. The play depicts the characters obsessed with foreign fashions as not being good, true Americans. They are self-absorbed, careless with money, and not accurate examples of a good American. By embracing his country, Trueman is presented as a better man. He is not swayed by foreign fashions and finds it necessary to right the wrongs of his fellow countrymen. The message being, that is what a real American would do.

Trueman is not as perfect or idealized as The Contrast’s Colonel Manly. In fact, he is something of a blowhard. He jumps to conclusions, and is a little too self-assured. He often operates under the assumption that he is right and is not terribly interested in what anyone else has to say. At several points in the play, Trueman either hits someone with his cane or threatens to. He both literally and figuratively beats people over the head with American ideals or his hickory stick.\(^{177}\) While Trueman’s flaws are obvious, they do not outweigh his positives. Mowatt adds to the bumpkin-hero hybrid by making the type more boisterous and self-assured, but at its core, the character remains honest and forthright.

So, what of the more negative and stupid traits of the country bumpkin, are they erased in America, do they fade away? In a word, no. All of the negative attributes of the country bumpkin still exist, but the more foolish qualities are shifted onto other characters, characters that are less like the likeable and innately perceptive bumpkin that is so well loved in America and instead more foolish and more often the target of ridicule. This trend can be seen in Fashion in the character of Zeke and the growing popularity in the country of racialized characters.

While Zeke is not altogether a foolish character, the split between the embraced straightforward American country bumpkin and the predominately foolish country bumpkin can be seen. The main difference is that the championed bumpkin character is a white American male, while the more foolish character is distanced from that white male model. During this time period, and for many years to follow, the more foolish version of the type is portrayed as a black character and performed by white actors in blackface.

Racializing characters and presenting a markedly more foolish bumpkin was not an entirely new concept. The practice of separating the beloved American character from some of

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\(^{177}\) The fact that he carries a hickory stick in itself has meaning. Hickory is strong and hard and not coincidently, Old Hickory was the nickname of Andrew Jackson.
the type’s negative roots had been occurring since before America was officially a country. In
*The Disappointment, or the Force of Credulity*, an American comic opera written in 1767, a
caracter by the name of Racoon was a dimwitted country bumpkin that did not possess the
intuitive nature or straightforward sense of the emerging American character type. Many critics
have referenced this character as being the first black character to appear in American theatre,
and if accurate this would greatly predate the rise and popularity of minstrel theatre and
characters in this country.\(^{178}\) However, assumptions that Racoon was intended to be a black
caracter were largely based on modern notions of racism and do not necessarily connect with
concepts of the eighteenth century. Besides the character’s name, a pejorative term often used as
a name in minstrel shows, the character’s lines were also written in dialect.\(^{179}\) At first glance, the
dialect appears very similar to the dialect used in many minstrel shows, but it is also similar to an
exaggerated version of what a nonnative Northern European accent might sound like to an Early
American ear. What many critics have now come to agree on is that Racoon was a German or
Scandinavian immigrant.\(^{180}\) The character was very much still othered and treated in a
derogatory manner, but the target was different.\(^{181}\) This illustrates that there was already the
presence of shifting, in this case ethnic, and it would grow with the rise of the naturally

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\(^{178}\) In his book *Black Theatre USA*, as well as in other publications, historian James V. Hatch makes mention of
Racoon being an early black character. This assumption was also made by Harold Sharp, Hugh Rankin, and a host
of others. While this idea has largely been disproved (Hatch has made note of this possible error) Racoon is still
sometimes referred to as a black character in recent research; for example, Marvin E. McAllister, *Whiting Up:
Whiteface Minstrels & Stage Europeans in African American Performance* (Chapel Hill: The University of North

\(^{179}\) Zip coon was a character that was often in minstrel shows. It is also a song that was frequently used in the shows.
Coon was also a name used for members of the Whig party.

\(^{180}\) Carolyn Rabson charts the misconceptions of the character in her article, “Disappointment Revisited: Unweaving

\(^{181}\) America has a long history of being disparaging to any influx of people not perceived to be "American." In
addition to African-Americans and American Indians, Irish, German, Italians, and more have been the subject of
discrimination and many a derogatory term.
intelligent, common sense filled, straight talking American character type born from the country bumpkin, and the othered bumpkin type who was devoid of the American type’s positive traits.

The racialized country bumpkin can be seen in *Fashion's Zeke*. The character is not without positive traits, but he is lacking in the traits that turn merely a bumpkin into the prototype of the American character. The fact that he is in numerous scenes with Trueman, the character representative of the American type, and is ridiculed, shows the disparity between the two types. Trueman is shown to be obnoxious, but ultimately superior to Zeke.

In his first appearance, and the first scene of the play, Zeke serves as the target of a joke. He is written with an exaggerated dialect, misuses words, and Millinette, the French maid, explains to the audience that she does "not comprehend one word he say" (pg. 1; 1.1). More than that, Zeke is also pleased with his uniform. That might not seem like much of an issue, but his livery is a sign of servitude, a position that was abhorred by the American type. In *The Contrast*, Jonathan took great offense to any suggestion that he was a servant. Travel literature also took note of how much offense Americans took to the idea of being servants. Charles Dickens noted that America was “a land where voluntary servitude is shunned as a disgrace.” 182 Frances “Fanny” Trollope, an English woman who wrote about her time living in the States noted, “it is more than petty treason to the Republic, to call a free citizen a servant” and that people “are taught to believe that the most abject poverty is preferable to domestic service.” 183 Mrs. Tiffany also makes mention of the negative attitude many Americans had against being a servant when she references hiring Zeke, “I’m rather sorry that he is black, but to obtain a white American for

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183 Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 41. Trollope had a far more negative view of the country than Dickens though she was in much different circumstances with great financial struggles. She found many American ideals hypocritical in light of the presence of slavery. However, she much preferred her time in the slave states because of the service she was provided.
a domestic is almost impossible; and they call this a free country!” (pg. 4; 1.1). The fact that Zeke is immediately shown to embrace his role as a servant, portrays him as a character that is not a true American, and not a model of the emerging American character type.

Zeke does share his roots with the American type, and they both display a number of bumpkin characteristics. Examining which traits the types display further demonstrates the separation of the two and the degradation of the othered/racialized character. Where Trueman is an example of a country bumpkin who has morphed into an American character and become the central character, the othered bumpkin is still at the periphery. This bumpkin in the fashion of the traditional type, provides comic moments (usually as the butt of jokes) and provides assistance to the main characters. Zeke operates in this role, appearing throughout the play to provide a quick joke for other characters.

Trueman, the representative of an American does not trust Zeke, notably on first site. This could be an immediate reaction to race, but it could also be a reaction to someone putting themselves in a position of servitude. Despite the fact that Zeke likely had limited options for employment and is working a difficult job for his wage, servitude subtracts from his standing as a man and an American. Whether it is an outright act of racism or not, it is absolutely an example of the class system at work. While the ideal of the American character is to be hardworking and simple, it is also important to have enough social standing and wealth to not be beholden to others as a servant. Zeke can try to be a man of action, but he is easily submitted by Trueman the representative of the American. Zeke's character is written as being submissive and in the culture that detracts from the American identity. The main point being, that although he might try, Zeke and other people outside the established power structure, will never be able to become the constructed concept of the American identity. This idea limits the range of who an American is
significantly. It basically cuts off all people of color, and women from the identity that is presented as being American.

A further way to diminish the type was to take aim at his intellect. Neither the bumpkin in its othered nor American character form is an educated type, but the othered bumpkin is also lacking intuitive knowledge. When referring to his own education, Zeke states that “a genus gets his learning by nature” (pg. 4; 1.1). That comment basically sums up the intellect of the bumpkin and the American character. Of course, Zeke thinks that he possesses such intellect, but the racialized character is stripped of the inborn knowledge found in so many bumpkin characters. Unlike Trueman, Zeke is easily fooled and cannot easily spot lies or see a person’s true nature. While Trueman immediately knew that there was something false about the Count, Zeke believes the scam and notes, “dat’s de genuine article ob a gemman” (pg. 32; 3.1). Zeke’s natural intellect is demeaned, and with that his standing as an American is diminished. The value he is afforded in the culture is clear. Millinette, while speaking French, calls Zeke a stupid animal, and that is how he is treated (pg. 35; 3.2).

While he is mentioned, Zeke does not appear in the play's final act. He has been present throughout the play and played a part in the building action, but he is not used to resolve any of the problems that have been created. He is not seen as the type of character who is capable of solving problems, just making them. Many country bumpkins, foolish though they may be, offer some assistance in resolving the conflicts of the play. Sir Willfull was a foolish and comic character, but he also helped the hero to resolve *The Way of the World's* many complications. Zeke is not used in the same manner. The racialized bumpkin is stripped of its innate cleverness and goodness, and is instead turned into a dumb buffoon who is nothing more than a tool for other characters.
This chart shows which countries the United States exported goods to from 1801-1812. Exports outside of Europe during this time period were negligible. The countries shown received exports that totaled over a million dollars. The United Kingdom is the blue and first column in every section. France is represented by green and is the
[fig. 3 cont.] second column. Germany is yellow and the third column in each grouping. Please note that there is a space for three columns in each grouping and if there is a blank, that country was below the million threshold for that year. The importance of trade with Great Britain in particular is evident.

[fig. 4] Political cartoonist William Charles created many illustrations on the War of 1812 including the above pictured, *The Hartford Convention or Leap No Leap*. The picture depicts King George III encouraging the representatives of New England states to align their allegiance with England and break off from the United States. The state representatives are struggling to make up their minds as to who they should side with.
ALARM AT WASHINGTON.

We have a thousand reports of British depredations on the shores and branches of the Chesapeake. Many of them have been dismissed without a narrative of bloodshed, but the last one, from the Potomac, from the general alarm which this movement has excited, appears to be more plausible than any transaction that has occurred since the blockade commenced. Our latest accounts make it appear, that the British squadron, consisting of 14 sail, had passed up the Potomac as far as Ragged Point, distant from Washington, by water, about 100 miles, and by land, about 60, according to the chart we have before us; that the fleet lay there for 24 hours, although the wind was favourable to pass up considerably higher; that the militia and volunteers of the District of Columbia, had turned out in considerable numbers, and were marching to Alexandria; and that the Secretary at War, had proceeded with 1200 men, regulars and militia, to Port Washington, a few miles below Alexandria, to dispute the passage of that place. Thus for our accounts. What is the object of this movement time must unfold; but from the celebrity of the operators of this squadron, we may safely predict, that what they intend to do, will be done quickly.

PROVIDENCE THEATRE.

PLAT NEVER PERFORMED HERE.

THIS EVENING, FRIDAY, JULY 23, will be presented, for the first time here, a much-admired Play, in five acts, called the

Doubtful Son;

Or, Secrets of a Palace;

Written by W. Dimond, Esq. author of the Rounding of the Forest, Adrian and Orella, Hunter of the Alps, &c.; and performed at the Theatre Royal, Hay-Market, London, thirty-five nights successively, with unbounded applause.

End of the Play. A favourite Patrick Song, by Mr. McFarland;

To which will be added, a favourite Parce, in two acts, called

The Weathercock;

Or, What Next?

[Characters, etc. see bills of the day.]

July 23, 1813.

[fig. 6] Pictured above, *A Scene on the Frontiers as Practiced by the "Humane" British and their "Worthy" Allies* by William Charles. A common idea was that the British were not only paying the American Indians to attack the American settlers, but that the British were also encouraging brutal acts of savagery.
During the course of the Civil War American society underwent vast changes. The most obvious came through the emancipation of the slaves, but that was not the only alteration. The class structure of the country was altered as the country became more and more industrialized. This chapter covers some of the causes of the Civil War and the aftermath that the war and Reconstruction had on American society. The nineteenth century’s ebb of manners plays will be discussed in relation to the popular rise of melodrama and variety shows. Finally, *A Texas Steer* will be examined as a play that encompasses all of the elements of this chapter. An author mainly known for his successful farces with musical interludes, Charles H. Hoyt expanded from more variety based shows to longer works and social satires. *A Texas Steer* reflects turn of the century America and the changes that had developed through the Civil War and Reconstruction. The play deals with an everyman type who is elected to political office. The setting gives a good picture of American politics and culture, and the country bumpkin American type is placed squarely in the middle of the story.

The rift between the northern and southern portions of the United States was not a new issue. Rather, issues had been growing for years and reached a head in mid-nineteenth century America. The North was considerably more industrialized than the South. The South had America’s number one export in cotton, but as detailed previously in the section on the Panic of 1837, even the most valuable of commodities was not without issues. Failing economies, weather, famine, and a myriad of factors outside of the South’s control could have a disastrous effect on their economy. The price and demand for cotton was once again high, but unforeseen
Factors could topple king cotton once again. The Industrial Revolution had traveled from England to America, but primarily the Northern states. The South’s wealth and power centered on one thing while the North had diversified its economy. This made the South vulnerable. It had largely kept its power through its prime export and political force and maneuvering.\textsuperscript{184} The three fifths compromise meant that a few white men in power were given even more power as they certainly did not represent the best interests of the slave population, but through the compromise got more representation to increase the power of slave holders, a minority of the population.\textsuperscript{185} However, this power was threatened as the population of the North grew. Immigrants were far more likely to settle in Northern states where there were industrial jobs. The South was not just made up of slaves and plantation owners. The majority of the White population did not consist of wealthy slave holders. For the lower class White Southerner, there were not the same job opportunities, opportunities for the unskilled laborer, and they faced the competition of slave (free) labor.\textsuperscript{186} The idea of adding more free states was a major concern to a region that could already see itself losing power.\textsuperscript{187}

Along with losing political/government power, the South was also sending a steady stream of business and money to the North. Without a diversified economy, the South was dependent on the North for a plethora of services. Most Southern businesses were financed by Northern banks, their cotton processed by Northern or British factories, and their goods shipped

\textsuperscript{184} For more on the economics of cotton and the split between North and South see, Eugene R. Dattel, \textit{Cotton And Race In The Making Of America: The Human Costs Of Economic Power,} (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009).


\textsuperscript{187} For a more detailed explanation of the political, social, and economic buildup to the Civil War see, Kenneth M. Stampp, \textit{America In 1857: A Nation On The Brink,} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
from Northern ports by Northern built ships. The North was dependent on the South’s business and needed the South as a market for their manufactured goods, and the South needed the services and goods of the North. There had always existed a fissure between the two regions, but the nation had been kept intact by their dependency on each other and an attempt to have equal power on each side. At midcentury the tension was at an all-time high and the South’s concern over a Northern shift in power would not be abated.\footnote{Stamppp 229-230}

The middle of the American nineteenth century was a period of drastic change that encompassed a multitude of great highs and lows. The country had recovered from the panic of 1837 and ensuing economic turbulence, but soon after Mowatt found success with \textit{Fashion} in 1845, America found itself once again plunged back into war. Unlike the American Revolution and the War of 1812, The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) was mostly fought on foreign soil and at a distance from the American people. Despite this distancing, the war exposed many political concerns that threw the country into turmoil and greatly influenced the future of the nation.\footnote{For more information on the Mexican War see, Otis A. Singletary, \textit{The Mexican War}, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1960), Robert Walter Johannsen, \textit{To The Halls Of The Montezumas: The Mexican War In The American Imagination}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), and David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, \textit{The Mexican War}, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006.)} Theatrically, variety shows and particularly minstrel shows were in high demand. Melodrama was on the rise by the midcentury and ruled the American theatre scene by the end of the 1800s. Like variety shows, melodramas appealed to mass audiences and could be used to
address timely issues.\textsuperscript{190} One of the most popular melodramas of the day, a play that would retain its popularity well into the next century, was \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin} (1852).\textsuperscript{191}

Based on abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe's serialized novel on the evils of slavery, [see fig. 7] the work was immediately dramatized by numerous playwrights.\textsuperscript{192} Various stage versions of the play were produced by abolitionists, as well as those who were in favor of slavery, and those who just wanted to capitalize on the popularity of the show and its characters. Even anti-slavery adaptations contained elements of minstrelsy and eventually would serve as inspiration for many minstrel shows and incorporate minstrel routines into performances of the play.\textsuperscript{193} During Reconstruction elements of the work were repurposed to portray the South as a place where slavery was not that bad, and the Whites of the South had been wrongly victimized by the War and Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{194} In its multiple versions the piece spoke to the pressing issues that divided the country.

While melodrama is not the focus of this work, it is important to mention because it is the overwhelmingly dominant force in American theatre of the time. \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin} in particular proves to be the most performed play in the American theatre. Additionally, the most well known adaptation by George L. Aiken contains an example of the hybrid American type that

\textsuperscript{190} For more on theatre of the period see, David Grimsted, \textit{Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater And Culture, 1800-1850}, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1968). Unlike the title implies the book doesn’t just cover melodrama, but all of theatre in the first half of the century.


\textsuperscript{192} Stowe’s work was originally published in 41 parts in the \textit{National Era}, an abolitionist newspaper. After the completion of its newspaper run, it was reworked and published as a book in 1852.

\textsuperscript{193} For more information on Uncle Tom minstrelsy and its use see Sarah Meers, \textit{Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, And Transatlantic Culture In The 1850s} (Athens: University Of Georgia Press, 2005).

\textsuperscript{194} For the history of \textit{Uncle Tom} performance adaptations see John W. Frick’s \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin On The American Stage And Screen} (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
had been developing since *The Contrast*. Phineas Fletcher is the quintessential country bumpkin in the popular mold of the Western frontiersmen, like Davey Crockett or Kit Carson. In true country bumpkin style he is not educated or polished, but possesses common sense and is clever in his own way. Like Trueman and Manly, he is used to voice the thoughts of what a good American should do and think. Phineas states that he had been a slave owner, but gave them their freedom. His purpose in the play, besides providing comic relief, is to assist a noble slave family in their escape from villainous slave hunters.\(^{195}\) It is a relatively small role that is not as developed as the character type in the manners plays, but assists in showing the pervasiveness of the type in American culture.

Theatre continued throughout the Civil War, particularly in the North where the physical landscape was not destroyed by battle. It was not the most productive time for native playwrights or original plays, but melodramas (many adapted from German and French works) and variety shows remained popular. While sometimes these works were used as a means to escape the horrors of the War, they were also used to highlight the country’s issues. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* remained popular, and panoramas of scenes from the Civil War proved an immense draw to Northern crowds [see fig. 8].\(^{196}\) The Civil War was an inescapable presence in the severed nation. Its inevitable possibility and eventual occurrence had been hanging over the country for decades. It would change the structure and culture of the nation. American identity and the theatre would grow to reflect the changes brought about not only by conventional but ideological

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\(^{195}\) Phineas appears in Act II of Aiken’s adaptation.

\(^{196}\) Civil War panoramas were numerous and extremely popular. They began to appear shortly after the start of the war and remained a presence throughout the century having a resurgence of popularity in the 1880s with cycloramas. There were even toys of Civil War panoramas like Milton Bradley’s “Myriopticon, A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion.” For more information on Civil War panoramas see Ivan David Ross, *Mediating the Historical Imagination: Visual Media and the U.S. Civil War, 1861-2011*, PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2012, (Publication No. 3526350).
warfare. The divide between the country had been apparent since its creation and had been
growing to a breaking point, a breaking point that became apparent through war, the Mexican-
American War.

In the late 1840s, The Mexican War occurred under President James K. Polk.\textsuperscript{197} The war
brought the United States new territory and more political problems. Many Whigs found the war
unjust, but the majority of those in power were in favor of expansion. Some were against the war
because it was unfair to American Indians and Mexico and it had no real cause other than
providing an opportunity to seize land.\textsuperscript{198} While there were surely a few objectors to the war that
had this humanitarian thought, the feelings behind most of the antiwar sentiment were far more
political. The new territories were a massive addition which included present day California,
Nevada, Utah, and large parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming, and it
increased the size of Texas.\textsuperscript{199}

With this new land came the question that occurred with each new territory, would they
be free or slave states? Polk himself was a slaveholder, and most of the troops in the war were
from slaveholding states. Additionally, much of the land was below the Missouri compromise
line.\textsuperscript{200} This battle was not so much about if slavery was right or wrong, but between the power
dynamic of North and South. Whigs and New Englanders were concerned that with the large

\textsuperscript{197} Polk was the 11th President of the United State, a Jacksonian Democrat, and a cotton planter.

\textsuperscript{198} The Mexican War (1846-1848) began as a dispute over Texas’ border. The Republic of Texas was annexed by
the US in 1845. Mexico claimed the Nueces River as the border while Texas and the US claimed the Rio Grande as

\textsuperscript{199} Heidler 141-143

\textsuperscript{200} The Missouri Compromise was passed in 1820 and prohibited the addition of new slave states from the Louisiana
Purchase, besides Missouri, above the latitude of 36°30’. Missouri entered as a slave state and to balance the number
of slave and free states, Maine was split off from Massachusetts and joined as a free state. The Compromise would
remain in effect until the Kansas-Nebraska Act that allowed white male voters to decide if their state should be a
free or slave state. For a detailed explanation of the Missouri Compromise see, John R. Van Atta, \textit{Wolf by the Ears:
The Missouri Crisis, 1819-1821}, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).
additions of land the South would increase in power.\textsuperscript{201} By allowing slavery, the South had an economic advantage in terms of cheap labor with which the North could not compete. The needs of the two sides were divergent and an imbalance in power or the perception of an imbalance was a major concern for those in free and slave states.\textsuperscript{202}

The political unrest was not just a squabble between the different parties, but an interior battle as well. Within the Democratic Party, which was currently in power, there was a regional divide with the Northern and Western members feeling as though they always took a backseat to Southern interests. Looking at past presidents gives some credence to the concept of Southern political power.\textsuperscript{203} This feeling was not lessened when Polk's government compromised with Great Britain on the boundaries of Oregon, a Northern (non-slave) territory, but would not compromise on the Southern (slave) state of Texas. One could easily argue that militarily and politically, it was much easier and safer to challenge Mexico than Great Britain, but in an environment where everyone was overly sensitive to regional issues, this incident just raised the antagonism between the North and South.\textsuperscript{204}

Politics in America were no longer dominated by party opposition, but regional opposition. Though they had many political differences, Northern Whigs and Democrats found themselves voting together while Southern Whigs and Democrats formed a voting bloc.

\textsuperscript{201} Heidler 136


\textsuperscript{203} Up through the US-Mexican War, Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Tyler, and Polk were all Presidents from the South. W.H. Harrison and Taylor were not based out of the South, but they were both born in Virginia, which added to the concerns many had about disproportionate Southern political influence. For more on Presidential regional and class affiliations see, Edward Pessen, \textit{The Log Cabin Myth: The Social Backgrounds of the Presidents}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

\textsuperscript{204} Van Atta 142-148
Although always present, the split between North and South grew tremendously during the Mexican conflict. Regional differences now overshadowed party differences.\textsuperscript{205} 

While internal battles consumed the American political scene through the 1850s that did not stop legions of European immigrants from streaming into the country. The North in particular saw a large influx of new inhabitants in the late 1840s and 1850s.\textsuperscript{206} Battles were not just between the North and South and Black and White, but amongst different ethnic groups as well.\textsuperscript{207} Previous immigrants took a dislike to new immigrants and that sentiment was returned. It only added to the antagonism that many of the new arrivals were Catholics in a predominately Protestant country.\textsuperscript{208} People who were ancestors of strident Protestants had formed much of America, and the distrust of all things Catholic was still strong.\textsuperscript{209} 

An economic downturn hit the States in 1857, but cotton remained relatively strong and the South did not feel the brunt of the recession. This in turn gave them a certain sense of invulnerability. It was illogical given previous downturns had caused much distress in the South,

\textsuperscript{205} For more on the regional rift during the Mexican War see the chapter, “Mexico Will Poison Us” in, James M. McPherson, \textit{Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 47-77.

\textsuperscript{206} Germans and Irish were the largest groups entering the country at the time. Stampp 10-11

\textsuperscript{207} The middle of the century was marked by a number of riots that boiled down to ethnic and religious differences. The Philadelphia Riots pitted Protestants and Catholics against one another. There were also multiple Know-Nothing Riots. The Know-Nothing group was anti-immigration and Catholic and battled with the newly arriving German and Irish immigrants. The Astor Place Riots were slightly different in that American nativists were on the same side as Irish Catholics who were rioting against British influence. For more on the discrimination against immigrants and Catholics see, Stampp 36-38. For more on specifically German discrimination see, Alison Clark Efford, \textit{German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era}, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For more on riots see, Tyler Gregory Anbinder, \textit{Nativism And Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings And The Politics Of The 1850's}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Nigel Cliff, \textit{The Shakespeare Riots: Revenge, Drama, And Death In Nineteenth-century America}, (New York: Random House, 2007).

\textsuperscript{208} The Irish Potato Famine occurred in the 1840s and thousands of Irish Catholics came to the States. Additionally, many of the German immigrants were also Catholic.

\textsuperscript{209} Stampp 132
but at a time of great dispute between the North and the South it fueled the South’s belief that it not only could survive, but thrive as its own nation.\textsuperscript{210}

While the motivation of Southern slaveholders to keep slavery alive was apparent, what of the rest of the Southern White population? The majority of the Southern White population did not own slaves, but those who did were more frequently in positions of wealth and power while non-slaveholders tended to be working class.\textsuperscript{211} To form a united front, those with power pushed the concept that slavery kept the White man equal. The argument was that because the South had slaves, White men were not forced to perform demeaning forms of labor. The idea being that if the slaves were freed, the working White man would be no better than a Black man. It would throw off the caste system. If slavery ended, lower class Whites would lose their ability to feel superior. On the power scale, lower and middle class Whites were nowhere near the same level as men that owned multiple slaves; their equality was an illusion, but a valuable one. It was the fear of Black and White equality that tied the non-slaveholding majority to the powerful men of the South. Non-slaveholding White Southerners were not at the same socioeconomic level as the slave owners, but they were a class above slaves. The fear that was instilled in the lower class White population was that if the slaves were freed, the lower class White population would still not be equal to the former slave owners who would maintain wealth and power, but they would no longer be a class above slaves. They were sold the idea that if the slaves were freed, they would essentially become slaves themselves. The Southern White non-slaveholding population were also scared into compliance by the threat that their wives and daughters would be forced to marry and breed with Black men. It is important to remember that both the North and the South

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid. 230

at this time were extremely racist and despite the growing belief in the evil of slavery, most were not open to the idea of true equality. The fear of living in non-segregated equality had been used in the North for years to quiet concerns about Southern slavery.\textsuperscript{212}

Economically, slaveholders were concerned that slaves, viewed as property, would be freed and slaveholders would not only lose the use of free labor, but also lose the property value of their slaves. While many slaveholders were exceedingly wealthy, their wealth was often not in the form of liquid assets. Much of their fortune was frequently tied up in property, e.g. land, crops, and slaves. They made their fortunes through cotton and tobacco, but their profits were pumped back into their plantations. If they were to lose their slaves they would lose an investment.\textsuperscript{213}

One of the many facets of the Civil War was a battle between the wants of the common man and the aristocrat. Southern gentry were interested in maintaining their inherited rights and class prerogatives, while the North was based more on industry. It should be noted that on both sides members of lower socioeconomic classes did the majority of the fighting and dying. Underneath all its other issues, the Civil War was a class war, and a fight for a way of life.\textsuperscript{214}

A majority of the Southern soldiers were from the lower classes. At first it was a volunteer army, and then men were drafted. In the first part of the war, men that could afford it could pay someone to take their place if they were drafted. In other words, the wealthy could


avoid the battlefield. The absence of upper-class men on the battlefield did not hold true in the highest military ranks. At the beginning of the war, the South in particular had a wealth of experienced and educated military men, men who were most often from well-established families.\textsuperscript{215} Commanders in the field had a higher mortality rate than the average soldier as they were often in the thick of battle and at the front of the lines directing their men. While the death rate of commanding officers was considerably higher than the average soldier, there were less of them and the majority of the dead and wounded were the poor and lower classes that were not commissioned officers from wealthy families, but drafted and enlisted men.\textsuperscript{216} Adding to this class separation was the wellbeing of the people away from the battlefield. While wealthy slaveholders could avoid the battlefield all together, even those that served had the advantage of knowing that their families had the assets to survive. For the poor soldier, no longer on his farm growing food or working to pay for food, his family suffered. The economy of the South struggled during the war and already poor families’ burdens increased exponentially when the primary provider was in the army for years where pay was uncertain and sporadic.\textsuperscript{217}

The South withdrew the option to hire a substitute to fulfill draft obligations largely because of fraud.\textsuperscript{218} Even with that change, many still found the Confederacy (even those within it) to be guilty of having the lower classes fight a war that had more to do with the rights of the


\textsuperscript{216} McPherson, \textit{Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction}, 192.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid. 408-412.

\textsuperscript{218} Both the North and the South frequently dealt with the problem of deserting substitutes. They would claim their fee and desert after reporting. Many would sign on as substitutes under false names multiple times. James M. McPherson, \textit{Battle Cry of Freedom} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 603-606.
wealthy. Draft laws were changed to increase the eligible pool of draftees. Substitution was eliminated, but an exemption remained for a man who owned twenty or more slaves, so in practice plantation families and the wealthiest could still procure an exemption. On the other hand, the age bracket of those eligible for conscription was eventually widened to between seventeen and fifty years of age. In the North, when the draft was instituted, there was the substitution option that was available throughout the war as well as the option to commute one's draft. To commute one’s draft, a man who was drafted could pay a fee to avoid service. Unlike using a substitute, this did not free the draftee for the entirety of the war, but just until the next draft where he might be drafted again. Of course he could at that time pay the fee again and avoid being in the military. It is evident now, and it was evident then, that there is a firm difference in the classes and a very existent class system. Some of the most successful and wealthy men in American history avoided military service during the Civil War. A prime example of the classist Union comes in the person of John Pierpont Morgan, who hired a substitute. In addition to not fighting in the war, he profited off of it. Other notable examples

219 Conscription laws were not just unpopular to the masses that might be drafted. The concept of a national draft was also at odds with the stated tenets of the Confederacy. By having a mandatory national draft, individual state’s rights (state’s rights being a claimed reason for secession) were superseded. This proved unpopular with many Southern politicians. James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw- Hill Higher Education, 2001) 203.

220 McPherson 203.

221 The Confederacy began a national conscription in 1861 that would grow as the war went on and forces shrank. The North waded into conscription by first allowing the power to the states to fill quotas. In practice this was used to increase enrollment. In 1863, the Conscription Act was passed and required the registration of men between the ages of 20 and 45. This included immigrants.

222 McPherson argues that the Civil War drafting system did not ultimately turn out as classist as it sounds, but I argue that at its very core, no matter the numerical results, it was most definitely as classist action. If you had means, you could avoid military service, while those without could not. Whether one chose to enlist is not the point, the option is. (*Battle Cry*, 603)

include Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Philip Armour, Jay Gould, George Pullman, Jim Fisk and future president Grover Cleveland.  

While the Civil War would free the slaves, equality was not achieved. The emancipation proclamation was decidedly unpopular in the South and in the North. One of the arguments made against emancipation in the North was the questioning of its legality. This argument was largely brought up by the Democratic Party. The negative opinion of Lincoln’s action can be summed up by an article in the New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette which comments that, “we say that in the eye of sound and humane international law, the Proclamation is not only unfit, but is infamous as a war measure.” While it seems ridiculous to argue that freeing slaves is inhumane, the effects the act would have on the people of the South and to a lesser extent the slaves, was not an uncommon argument. Lincoln’s opposing party charged him with making an act that was outside his power and not a reasonable act of war.

Another factor negatively effecting the reception of emancipation came from the poor laboring class that was concerned about the possibility of employment competition from newly freed slaves. This already present feeling of animosity was intensified when the Union implemented the draft. Many in the Northern labor force, many of them immigrants, not only resented the possibility that they might be forced into military service, but thought that they would be fighting a war that if won would negatively affect their employment. Many Northern cities experienced draft and race riots in 1863. These riots basically turned into an attack on

[224] Jim Fisk was a Northerner who was suspected of smuggling cotton from the South and also of selling Confederate bonds. In addition to Brands, American Colossus, also see Kenneth D. Ackerman, The Gold Ring: Jim Fisk, Jay Gould, And Black Friday, 1869, (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1988) and Edward Chancellor, Devil Take The Hindmost: A History Of Financial Speculation, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999) 122-190, for more information on financial maneuvering and manipulation during the period.

Black people and property. Riots in New York saw the brutal murder of Black men and the burning of a Black orphanage.\textsuperscript{226}

Politically, support for Lincoln waned with the Democrats winning elections over Republicans soon after Lincoln’s stated support for emancipation.\textsuperscript{227} For many, emancipation was less about restoring human rights and was instead seen as a valuable tool. When discussing Union General William Sherman in his book \textit{American Colossus}, H.W. Brands makes an observation that could apply to many Union strategists. Basically that emancipation was used, “as an act of war” meant to “destroy” the Southern economy.\textsuperscript{228} The Southern economy was based on slave labor and a direct attack on that system would weaken the South’s resources and shorten the conflict. While there were exceptions to this motivation as there were a number of abolitionists who believed in the value of all men, the majority were fighting to keep the union intact and not to expressly bring freedom to slaves. Indeed, a growing sentiment of unrest on the Northern side was that by fighting for freedom for the slaves, the White soldiers were actually fighting to enslave the White lower classes of which many of them were from. Ultimately emancipation was achieved, but it should not be confused by a great growth of affection in the country for the Black race. The entire country, North and South, were racist.

W.E.B. Du Bois points out in his essential work, \textit{Black Reconstruction in America}, that “of all that most Americans wanted, this freeing of slaves was the last. Everything black was


hideous. Everything Negroes did was wrong.”229 There was a decidedly negative opinion of the Black population that was not limited to one portion of the country. The South resented what they saw as a loss of property, and the North was unnerved by the influx of a Black population that they saw as beneath them and as competition; a concept that offended them.

In crafting the 14th amendment, the myth of equality once again reared its ugly head. The Northern congress (the Southern states were not yet readmitted) did not require Black suffrage, but penalized states that did not offer it. Because of differences in population the writers of the amendment were able to keep Southerners out of power without actually having to provide Black suffrage in their own states. One of the biggest issues progressives had against their own party was the issue of requiring suffrage in Southern states while still denying it in many Northern states.230

While the hope was that Reconstruction would reintegrate the South into the nation's economy and help to establish the newly free lives of the slave population, Reconstruction did not go as smoothly as desired. While the slaves achieved freedom, they did not achieve equality. The power of the South was definitely deflated, with many of the wealthy losing vast amounts of their assets and power, but the hierarchy of power in the region did not change much. Initially, under a Northern led government, wealth was somewhat redistributed, but the South had been economically devastated by the war and those with less found it harder and harder to maintain. Share cropping became more common with Black and poor White farmers. To earn enough money, they generally had to plant cotton, which means that they had to buy food. It also meant

229 Du Bois 125

that more and more cotton was being produced leading to a large supply. The price of cotton dropped which further harmed the South's already hampered economy. Many Blacks who had gained land after the war lost it again due to the economy and because of the maneuverings of the men who were higher up the economic pyramid. Poor Black and White farmers were dependent on credit to afford to operate their farms, but if there were crop issues or lower cotton prices, they would fall further and further in debt. Dependent on steep credit, many were lucky to break even when things went well. The lower classes were once again locked into a system where they were dependent on the upper-class and the upper-class milked the lower classes for all they were worth.  

So did anything positive come out of Reconstruction? Yes, while many of the initial goals of Reconstruction did not come to fruition, it did set in motion the establishment of public education in the South. Before the war the Southern Black population had virtually no opportunity for an education. The majority of the White population was also uneducated and many illiterate. In the years after the war, schools, although mostly segregated, were established and the literacy rates of Black and White Southerners grew considerably. As a whole, the South's hold on the nation's economy dropped significantly during Reconstruction. Before the war, the region was agriculturally based and had little manufacturing. During the war, industrialization in the South increased out of necessity, but many of those gains were destroyed in the war and crumbled during Reconstruction. Instead of increasing, industrialization in the South went on a downward trend after the war.


While power had been wrested from some of the South's powerful plantation owners, some of that success was only temporary. The most powerful were able to reclaim much of their power after post war sanctions wore off and the dismal economy worked to their advantage as the poorer populations succumbed to economic hardships the wealthier class could sustain themselves longer and reclaim their losses. While some of the South's White power structure was struck down and some men were never able to regain the power they once lost, that power seldom transferred to a middle or lower class working its way up. Yes, there was more upward mobility, but more often than not, it was just another wealthy powerful White man taking control. Now it was just Northern power and money.233

The variety of entertainment in nineteenth century America grew to meet the demand of a growing population. At the same time, entertainment was also becoming more centered upon profit. Of course producers and performers had previously wanted their ventures to be successful, but during this time period there was a growing importance placed on economic results, often over quality.234 Melodrama hit its peak after the Civil War and the genre’s broad types and sensationalist plots attracted a wide audience, as did its ability to easily alter its scale. On a large scale, melodrama can be quite elaborate and emphasize spectacle. One of the most popular plays in midcentury America was Augustine Daly’s *Under the Gaslight* (1867). Regardless of whether the reviews were positive or negative, almost all of the reviewers commented on the spectacular nature of the production more than any other aspect of the play. The *Boston Post* stated that it was, “the most emphatic success of the season, especially in the

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stage effects, many of which are original, while all are striking and effective.”

The New York Tribune’s review was far more critical bemoaning, “that the drama, as an art, is dead,” in regards to spectacle heavy shows. Under the Gaslight certainly qualified as a show that relied highly on spectacle and the reviewer noted that it excelled, “as a vehicle for the production of theatrical effects.” The spectacular aspect of the show was not just something that the critics noticed; it was how the show was promoted. In one of the play’s advertisements it touts, “the great railroad scene – a wondrous stage effect.” By far the most notable thing about the show was its now iconic railroad scene. Snorkey, a Civil War veteran, is tied up and placed on railroad tracks by the evil villain as a train quickly approaches. At the last moment, Snorkey is saved by the play’s heroine, Laura Cortlandt, who is locked in a shed, but breaks out of the building with an ax and moves Snorkey out of the way of the oncoming train. While this scene could be created on a smaller scale with paint, lights, and sound effects, the play would lose its main draw. Daly’s production included an actual train moving down the tracks on stage.

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239 This will become a common trope in melodramas. However, instead of Daly’s version of having a heroine save somebody, the scene is not surprisingly changed to a man saving a damsel in distress.
240 This scene actually prompted a lawsuit between two of the most important theatrical figures of the time. Daly sued to stop another play, After Dark by Dion Boucicault, because Boucicault’s play contained a similar scene with an oncoming train. Daly v. Palmer et al, Circuit Court, S.D. New York, 1868. The suit names Palmer as the suit was an injunction to stop the performance of After Dark from happening at Niblo’s Garden. Henry Palmer was a manager at Niblo’s Garden. Daly’s argument hinged upon the idea that the railroad scene was the key element of his play. He argued copyright infringement on the grounds that to have another play with a similar effect was stealing his idea and what made Under the Gaslight successful. This is undoubtedly true, but it is interesting to have that thought claimed in a legal document. I should also note, that the judge sided in Daly’s favor and an injunction was placed on the performance of Boucicault’s play. Seldon Faulkner, “The Great Train Scene Robbery,” Quarterly Journal Of Speech 50.1 (1964): 24.
certainly a major selling point of many melodramas, that was not the only aspect of the genre that resonated with the public.

Melodramas could also be produced effectively with a much lower budget and in more rural environments. During the 1800s, medicine shows thrived, moving from town to town on trains or in wagons with virtually no scenic spectacle. The shows, selling generally worthless potions and products, would gather crowds and potential buyers by performing. Frequently these performances came in the form of melodrama. There was not the same level of spectacle that could be found in the country’s big urban theaters, but with recognizable types and melodramatic plots, audiences were drawn in. To draw people into their sales pitch, medicine sellers provided entertainment and often put on a show to sell their wares. The whole purpose of the shows was to sell a product. While this may seem like an extreme example in comparison to other forms of entertainment, it operates in a similar manner to current television broadcasts that provide shows with the purpose of getting the audience to watch advertisements. Medicine shows incorporated many elements of the theatre into its shows, deftly combining art and commerce in a way that would influence future American entertainment.

The lack of pharmaceutical regulations and good medical care made early America a prime location for the selling of tonics, elixirs, and various magic potions. Medicine was not the prime interest of the shows. The peddlers' main interest was selling their product and making a profit, but for the communities that they visited the prime draw was the entertainment that the medicine-selling troupe provided. Audiences wanted the shows to return, especially entertainment starved towns that had no local theatres, and the best way to get the troupes to return was to buy their products. The shows were frequently free or very inexpensive and even
with buying some of sellers' product the experience still ended up being an affordable way for people to access entertainment.²⁴¹

Even in the patent medicine shows character types played a significant role. A version of the country bumpkin American type was one of the most prevalent. Along with the “noble savage” Native American type, the Yankee peddler was a key figure in the patent medicine world. On the one hand the type is a sort of hyper-American everyman that should be able to relate and be relatable to the masses, but at the same time is also sly. In this case the craftiness of the character type is used to sell a product that the audience/consumer probably does not need. The character could appear in the play that the company was performing, or he might be acting as the salesman during the performance. While the country bumpkin character was often the pitchman, Native American characters were frequently depicted as the originators of the elixirs the troupes were selling. The Native American characters were seen as having a superior relationship with the land, they were also seen as being inferior to the White, European population. Despite the carefully crafted image of a character that strived to make medicine and make it available to the White man, those same characters were also presented as being a threat to the White population. The dichotomy between the two aspects of the character was quite large. On the one hand they were portrayed as being a benevolent and wise people who were offering help to their new neighbors the White men, but on the other hand they were presented as characters that were violent and dangerous and had to be kept in check by the conquering White man. As a result, the Native American characters were a primary interest at the shows but the White characters were depicted as being in control of all of the Native Americans and putting the

audience at ease. Like the noble savage character seen in dramas, the medicine show characters presented a constructed figure that never really existed.\footnote{McNamara, 83.}

Melodrama was the primary theatrical genre of the time and made use of extreme situations and characters.\footnote{Wilson, 202.} The patent medicine business frequently harnessed the power of melodrama and Native American characters played a part in that as well. The stories of how different medicinal products came to be available for sale were often melodramatic in nature. The back-story for many products was about a Native American saving the life of a White person who was on the brink of death. This basic premise was repeated for many products, but with varying specifics. One story had a man being saved after a storm by a Native American armed with his trusty cure-all medicine. The saved man took a portion of the medicine and had it analyzed so that he could reproduce the formula (for the good of the population of course) that the audience now had the opportunity to buy.\footnote{McNamara, 104.} Other versions had Native Americans willingly preparing the medicine for the good of the people.\footnote{Ibid, 83.}

Melodramas, often temperance plays, were also performed at many medicine shows. The temperance movement in America had been around since the 1700s, but it began to spread significantly in the middle portion of the nineteenth century. The concept was gaining popularity in society and it was reflected on the stage:

\begin{quote}
Alcohol was a natural ingredient of many melodramas and farces that entertained nineteenth-century American audiences. Good people might celebrate with it; the unwary and the weak would make fools of themselves with it; villains were
\end{quote}
expected to abuse it or to use it to bring ruin or embarrassment to others. The temperance appeal simply allowed playwrights to concentrate upon an established spectacle in the theatre and enhance it with an acceptably popular moral.\textsuperscript{246}

In other words, authors could write in the already popular melodramatic mode and by shaping the story around the theme of temperance have both a successful and morally pleasing play. Temperance plays were hugely successful and were performed at a variety of venues.\textsuperscript{247} They were staged at traditional theatres, museum theatres, and during medicine shows.

The two most popular of these types of plays performed in medicine shows were William Smith's \textit{The Drunkard: or the Fallen Saved} (1844) and \textit{Ten Nights in a Bar-Room} (1858), a play by William Pratt that was adapted from the popular novel by Timothy Shay Arthur.\textsuperscript{248} The plots are fairly similar in that they follow men that have been driven to drink by villainous characters, but they eventually realize that drinking only leads to ruin. Within that basic plot there are several opportunities for moralizing and for over dramatic moments. The temperance play appealed to medicine show companies because it provided needed entertainment, but because of the moral stance they also hoped it would bring in an audience that would normally not attend theatrical events.

Melodrama is still the most dominant form in American entertainment and is easily found in television, movies, and video games. Other genres were still used and manner plays would come back into prominence in the twentieth century, but the last half of the nineteenth century was most definitely ruled by melodrama. Not only was melodrama the most viewed kind of

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\item \textsuperscript{247} Wilson 123.
\item \textsuperscript{248} Anderson 94-5.
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theatre, but it also influenced the rest of the theatre world. Moving forward, American manners plays show the influence of melodrama and in general become more dramatic than their English counterparts.

While social comedies were not as prevalent in the latter half of the nineteenth century as melodrama and variety shows, the occasional manners play still found an audience. *A Texas Steer* is more farcical than the other plays featured in this dissertation, but it follows the same patterns as more obvious manners plays. The story features familiar character types, a couple that neatly comes together in the play’s final moments, and timely social satire.

*A Texas Steer* opened in 1890. The play was written by Charles H. Hoyt, a well-known theatrical figure who was made popular by his farces. While *A Texas Steer* is quite farcical and the play’s stage directions make the physical humor of the play clear, the piece has notably more dramatic heft than many of Hoyt’s previous works. Many critics took note in the development of his work and praised the keen social satire of the play. One reviewer went so far as to comment, “Mr. Hoyt has given in his new comedy some of the most stinging satire that has been written for the stage since the time of Sheridan’s *School for Scandal*.”249 On the other hand there were critics that wrote off Hoyt’s work as broad, vulgar, for an uncultured crowd, and far from legitimate theatre. One particularly aggravated critic opined, “It is one of the absurdities and distresses of the critic’s métier that he is constantly required to analyze such dramas as if they were in any just sense or in the most modest degree works of art.”250 The critics’ diverging views on Hoyt and his plays give an enlightening view into the class imbalance in the country and the concept of American identity. *A Texas Steer* is the ideal play to examine for this period.


250 “*A Texas Steer* reproduced at the Tremont Theatre” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Sept. 15, 1891, Pg. 5.
because it is not only a manners play with an example of an American type, but it also gives an intriguing view into the political and social structure that is emerging after the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Like The Contrast and Royall Tyler, much was made of Hoyt’s nationality in terms of authorship. The American theatre had continually been a place where foreign works were more abundant. However, there was again a desire for a great American playwright. Contemporary critics were very much split on Hoyt. Many critics found his work unworthy of being called art or legitimate theatre, while others thought him the greatest American dramatist. A key element in all of the praise and criticism was the Americaness of it all. One critic referred to Hoyt’s work as being, “peculiarly American,” while the Cambridge Chronicle noted:

There is no doubt about the place that one American dramatist will have when the final history of the stage comes to be written. Many writers went to England, France or Germany for their models and worked out imitations of the compositions which they found there, but Charles H. Hoyt started along original lines and the uniform success which his plays have attained clearly demonstrates the truth that American audiences honor American originality. Regardless of the review being positive or negative, much like The Contrast nearly every article mentions that Hoyt and his play are thoroughly American.

Charles Hoyt differs from Tyler and Mowatt in his background and upbringing and hails from a more middle class family. His father worked as a railroad clerk and his mother died when he was still a boy. While decidedly more middle class than Royall Tyler and Anna Cora

251 “A Texas Steer at Opera House,” Springfield Republican (Springfield, MA) Sept. 11, 1891, pg. 3.
Mowatt, Hoyt was still born into privilege. Hoyt’s father George served a term in the New Hampshire legislature and Charles had significant educational opportunities. He received a primary education including time at Boston Latin School and cursory law training through an apprenticeship, but he had no college education.\(^{253}\) He worked as a journalist first in St. Albans Vermont, and eventually as a dramatic critic for the *Boston Post*. Like his father, and Tyler, Hoyt also spent time as a politician serving in the New Hampshire legislature in the 1890s. However, politics was never his primary career or interest, nor did it need to be as he was quite successful in the theatre. Whereas theatre was a side interest for Tyler and a necessity for Mowatt, it proved to be a lucrative business for Hoyt.

Hoyt built his success with farces that appealed to a broad audience. This brought him popularity and financial success, but at the same time it gained him and his works disdain from some theatre critics. A common thought shared by many critics of the time was summed up in the *Springfield Republican*, “the most conspicuous instance in America of a playwright who has the people with him while the critics, especially those who lay claim to culture, are against him, is Charles A. [sic] Hoyt, the author of a succession of trifling farces, whose chief merit, aside from their funniness, is their wealth of characters taken from real life.”\(^{254}\) The contemporary reviews of Hoyt’s work show a trend. The critics confess the popularity of his work and find it uniquely American, but they find it inferior and frequently beneath them. However, *A Texas Steer* is often seen as a departure from much of his work and indeed as a vast improvement. For example, this “glowing” review:

\(^{253}\) In an interview with *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, Hoyt speaks of his education and claims that he was offered admission to West Point, but declined. “Mirror Interviews,” *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, June 2, 1895, pg. 2.

\(^{254}\) “With Players and Their Plays” *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, MA) Nov. 2, 1890, pg. 3.
Of all the plays produced by Charles H. Hoyt, none save *A Midnight Bell* had risen above the level of rough and boisterous farce; but last evening a second piece worthy to be regarded as a comedy, although it had the title *A Texas Steer*, was acted at the Bijou Opera House. In this work Mr. Hoyt has demonstrated for a second time, his ability to aim reasonably high without missing thereby the bullseye of popular favor.255

What praise! The majority of critics often found fault with Hoyt in regard to his work being “art”, but there was a general consensus that *A Texas Steer* managed to work as both a structurally sound play and a piece that was accessible and enjoyable to the masses. *A Texas Steer* maintained Hoyt’s broad appeal and travelled around the country multiple times gathering large crowds and became part of the popular culture, it being noted that the play was “now as familiar as household words.”256 *A Texas Steer* is not a farcical sketch that relies solely on physical humor and vulgar jokes; rather it is a four act social satire that has elements of farce while providing percipient cultural commentary.

*A Texas Steer* is about a wealthy Texas cattleman who is voted into Congress against his will. Maverick Brander is the country bumpkin American type that is more comfortable in his laid back and rural environment. However, much like in *Fashion*, his wife and daughter want to partake in a more metropolitan society. The two arrange for Brander to win the election while he is out of town and the family relocates to Washington D.C. Brander and his family’s bumpkiness are very apparent on their arrival to the city. Like most country bumpkins, Brander lacks sophistication. He is ignorant to city manners, but is clever. Despite appearing foolish on

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255 “Play’s the Thing” *Wheeling Register* (Wheeling, WV) Nov. 16, 1890, pg. 3.

256 “Dramatic Notes” *Themis* (Sacramento, CA) April 18, 1891, Issue 9, pg. 5.
arrival, he adapts to his environment and puts his American common sense to work. Like the other featured plays, *A Texas Steer* presents the image of the common American and champions the straight forward, common sense having man. He is presented as an everyman, something that “real” Americans innately are or should strive to be.

One significant difference in *A Texas Steer* from *The Contrast* and *Fashion* is not in the construction of the American type, but to whom that type is presented. While *The Contrast* and *Fashion* were both popular plays and seen in multiple markets, they do not compare to the reach of Hoyt’s play. This in part has to do with the infrastructure of the country and with Hoyt’s audience. *The Contrast* and *Fashion* were limited by the country’s transportation system and theater organization and communication. Turn of the century America offered an improved railway system that allowed a show to travel all over the United States. When *Fashion* and *The Contrast* were first produced, the rail system was fledgling to nonexistent. The construction of the transcontinental railroad would vastly change all aspects of the country.\(^{257}\)

After years of speculation, the transcontinental railroad was built in the 1860s when the United States government backed the project with the Pacific Railway Act of 1862. As it was partially constructed and planned during the Civil War, the route was more Northern, not going through the Confederate states. The Act also authorized the creation of the transcontinental telegraph line, which vastly improved communication across the country. It should be noted that while the construction of the railroad and telegraph lines was an incredible achievement and led to more advancements in the country, it also came with a cost. The Act provided for taking land from those who were already settled, with particular language aimed at Native Americans, “the United States shall extinguish as rapidly as may be the Indian titles to all lands falling under the

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\(^{257}\) For a detailed study on the transcontinental railroad see, David Haward Bain, *Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Viking, 1999).
In addition to displaced populations, immigrant workers (largely Chinese and Irish), toiled in dangerous working conditions.

Nearly 2,000 miles of track was laid down from 1862-1869. Previously to the 1860s, when *The Contrast* and *Fashion* were originally performed, the American rail system was strictly regional. There was no mass transportation system that would allow for the vast dramatic touring that would become more common. In the following decades, other rail lines rapidly grew off of the central line, opening up the country to new settlement and enterprise. With these advancements not only was *A Texas Steer* performed under Hoyt’s supervision in the expected venues of New York and New England, but it was also a hit in West Virginia, California, and Oregon. In addition to being able to travel more broadly and easily, the ability to book performances at theatres in advance was much improved. Communication systems had improved vastly with widespread implementation and use of the telegraph. The combination of better transportation, improved communication, and connected booking agents made scheduling more exact and led to a wider audience.

Hoyt follows many of the same conventions that had been developing in American theatre over the last hundred years. The central male figure is a country bumpkin American hero.

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258 Pacific Railway Act of 1862

259 May 10, 1869, the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific rail lines joined in Utah.

260 Shows did travel. There were rail routes that connected parts of the country, but not all of the country. For example, one could travel by rail to many locations in the Northeast or in other regions of the country, but not from one region to another. Travel by stagecoach was not uncommon for theatre groups. Many medicine shows travelled and performed out of their carts. However, traveling by coach was onerous and not practical for long trips or large or elaborate productions. Don B. Wilmeth, Christopher Bigsby, “Introduction,” *The Cambridge History Of American Theatre: Volume I Beginnings to 1870*, Bigsby and Wilmeth eds. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 17-19.

hybrid that has emerged as the American type: a white and wealthy male who exudes common sense. He is presented as the common man, but in reality the privilege of this type of character far exceeds the majority of the American population. The audience may see, and is meant to see this character type as an everyman, a man they could be or know, but his means are generally beyond what the audience will ever attain. Like in Fashion, there is a shifting of negative characteristics. That is not to say that Brander does not do foolish things, rather there is a racialized character that is always far more foolish and serves to make Brander look considerably wiser. While the negative shifting continues, the world portrayed in the play grows in terms of representation and not in an entirely negative vein.

Like Mowatt, who showed the societal disadvantages women were subjected to, Hoyt has a growing awareness of disenfranchised sections of American society. It is not always part of the main narrative, but there are multiple lines in the play that make mention of the societal wrongs inflicted on portions of the population. A character makes note of a parcel of land being bought “from an Indian Chief for two blankets and an old gun” (pg. 26; act 2). While it is an offhanded comment played for a joke, it also addresses the mistreatment of Native Americans.

An ongoing thread throughout the play deals with government corruption in general and the manipulation of the Black population specifically in elections. The play starts with two Black characters, Mink and Crab, being paid to vote. Mink rails at Crab for selling his vote and claims that his own vote cannot be bought, but follows up that statement by mentioning that he did accept a new pair of boots for his vote. This is once again played for a joke, but Mink expresses a serious issue in his tirade aimed at Crab:

Don’ yo’ tink I know dar was money to be had? Majah Yell, he offered me five dollars fo’ my vote, but I said, ‘No, sah! I’m not dat sort o’ man sah! Do yo’ think I’d barter my right o’ sufferin’ fo’ a mess o’ potash, sah!! No, sah! If de cullad vote is to be a article of commerce, sah, de race will go to de dogs, sah!’ I wouldn’t tech a cent ob his money, sah! The best I’d do was let him by me a par ob boots” (pg. 11; act 1).

A Black man in America could now vote, but it is still the White power structure that controls that vote. That same structure also demeans the Black population’s ability to understand and operate in American civic life. It is pointed out several times in the play that the Black population is only considered of value when their vote is needed, chattel to be bought and sold at the needs and whims of the wealthy and powerful men that run the country.

The corrupt election takes place in Texas, but Hoyt makes the point that this kind of corruption is rampant all over the country with the dialogue between Lieutenant Green, who has just arrived in Texas, and Captain Bright, who is about to leave Texas for Washington,

GREEN: I don’t understand the way they do things here at all. Now, take this congressional election – why, it seems to have been a perfect farce.

BRIGHT: No more so than such elections are everywhere. The bosses named their man and the people elected him, just as they do in New York. There was a difference in the detail of doing it, just as there’s a difference between New York and Texas, but their principle was just the same. (pg. 11-12; act 1)

The Black vote is something to be bought and managed. When discussing Brander’s competition in the election his daughter, Bossy recalls that, “the other folks thought they had us
there. They had two thousand niggers all rounded up and ready to corral. But when Major Yell jumped in among ‘em with those five dollar bills, they stampeded and never stopped running till they were all on our range, and then Yell had his Brand on ‘em in no time” (pg. 13; act 1). They are treated as cattle, still as property, no longer slaves, but a new kind of commodity that can be manipulated to bring about positive returns for the White power structure. Along with these moments in the play showing the different social classes, it also shows the importance of money in American society and the role it plays in corruption. This aspect is summed up by Bossy, again in the form of a joke, “he’ll [Brander] have the satisfaction of knowing that he came by his election honestly. He paid all it was worth for it” (pg. 14; act 1).

Fishback is a Black politician and is the butt of much humor. He retains the negative aspects of the country bumpkin throughout the play and makes a fool of himself repeatedly. While both he and Brander travel to Washington, only Brander, the country bumpkin American hybrid type, is able to adapt. Fishback retains all of the negative qualities of a country bumpkin. Fishback is at his most foolish when he tries to be something that he is not, a common fault amongst bumpkins. In this case he is trying to be sophisticated, but just manages to spout a bunch of clichés in his attempt to sound important and refined. He is of course seen as a fool and in the first act is referred to as a “creature,” much like Jonathan was in The Contrast, and referenced with the question, “what is it?” Unlike Brander, Fishback is not able to adapt to his new surroundings and finds himself in increasingly dire straits. Eventually, he is saved by Brander. This mirrors the way many a country bumpkin was helped by the truewit character in Restoration plays.

Fishback returns to see Brander after he has been unsuccessful in finding employment. Brander takes pity on him and sends Fishback away with money to buy a suit and promises to
help. While Fishback came to Washington believing he had been appointed to be the Minister of Dahomey, a job that did not exist, he is elated when Brander finds him a job:

FISHBACK: I have received my appointment, sah, and assume the duties of my official position, sah, to-morrow. I just dropped in so as to allow you to congratulate me, sah, and to say, sah, dat at anytime, sah, de services an’ favahs pertaining to my department are at your command, sah.

BOSSY: What is you department?

FISHBACK: I have the general supervision of de dumping of de waste baskets.

It’s a mighty imp’otant office. I’ll fill it, I trust, with credit to our district.

(pg. 39; act 4)

Forever the fool, Fishback is pleased with his job as a janitor and credits his newfound employment with far more prestige than his job warrants. Brander has succeeded in saving Fishback from dire circumstances, and at the same time found him a job for which he is more suited. While Fishback sounds ridiculous talking about his janitorial job in such a grandiose way, he is less foolish than when he was talking about his job as a foreign minister. This is in holding with the rule that bumpkins are at their most foolish when they are pretending to be something they are not. Fishback was never capable of being a dignitary, but he is quite capable of being a janitor. Fishback retains these negative aspects of the bumpkin type. On the other hand, Brander is able to constantly adapt, and while he might have moments of appearing foolish, he has the capability to rise to any challenge and still maintain his positive bumpkin

263 Dahomey is a region of Southwestern Africa (present day Benin). It rose to be a powerful kingdom in part because of its lucrative slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries. During the 1880s and 1890s, Dahomey was frequently mentioned in the news with many references to barbarism. During the 1880s and 1890s the region was involved in a conflict with France and eventually succumbed to French colonialism. It was also of frequent mention in minstrel works. "History," Background Notes On Countries of the World: Benin (2005): 3-5. Business Source Complete.
traits. Brander does not qualify as a wit character, but the American character type is growing towards that. The country bumpkin and its straightforward attributes are still celebrated, but the American type is becoming more evolved. This bumpkin is able to be the hero and relies on common sense rather than wit.

The theme of corruption continues throughout the play and is also addressed through Brander’s character. In Act One after he learns that he has been elected, Brander exclaims, “I’m an honest man! What do I want in Congress?” He is apprehensive about his new position and its seemingly inescapable corruption and initially tries to turn down his post. When the crowd questions why Brander does not want to represent them in Congress, he is attacked by the question of if he thinks he is “too good to represent” them (pg. 17; act 1). In the published version of the play and the vast majority of its performances, this conversation is accompanied by the townspeople pulling guns on Brander. This added visual makes Brander’s choice to accept his appointment simple to understand. However, in an earlier version, Hoyt did not include the direction for the weapons. Even without the guns and the threat of mob violence, there was a convincing reason for Brander to go to Washington. As the country bumpkin American type, Brander sees himself as an everyman. Despite the fact that he does not want to be a Congressman, he agrees in part because it is integral to his sense of self that he be seen as the common man and not as someone that is “too good to represent” his fellow Americans; it is part of the type’s identity.

Brander and his family go to Washington and Brander is part of the society in that he has been elected to go there. However, he stands out as a country bumpkin from the Western frontier who does not understand city manners. Much like Jonathan, Brander shows that he is unfamiliar with big city ways to the amusement of others. In one of the more famous scenes in The
Contrast, Jonathan does not realize where he is when he is in a theatre. Unbeknownst to him, Jonathan has taken a seat in a theatre and recounts his experience, “they lifted up a great green cloth and let us look right into the next neighbor’s house. Have you a good many houses in New-York made so in that ‘ere way?” (Pg. 72; 3.1). Similarly, Brander does not realize when he is in an elevator:

I came into the hotel and says I, ‘I want to go to my room!’ A boy standing in a little office-like place says, ‘Step in here!’ and when I did, he shut an iron bar door behind me that fastened with a spring lock, and then the floor began to rise up under me! I dunno what his game was, but I pulled my gun on him and says I, ‘You let me out o’ here.’ He sees I meant business and he did it. (pg. 19; act 2)

Like most country bumpkins and the hybrid American type, Brander’s appearance is commented on heavily. Even before he appears on stage his wardrobe receives much commentary. Captain Fairleigh Bright, the romantic interest of Brander’s daughter, comments that the cattleman’s clothes are fine for Texas, but unacceptable for Washington, “we’ll have to manage some way for your father to have some decent clothes to wear here” (pg. 16; act 1). The couple surmises that Brander will not be interested in changing his appearance so they conspire to take one of his suits to a tailor in Washington so a new, more acceptable set of clothes can be made for him without his knowledge. Like Witwould and Trueman, Brander’s clothing marks him as an outsider. On the one hand this adds a light bit of foolishness to the character, but with the American types it is also a symbol of their separation from European culture. It marks them as independent, which in holding with the American identity is synonymous with being American.
Brander does not just decide he needs to fit in and change clothes; he is given an outside reason to adapt his look to the new surroundings. The people in the city think he is part of a “wild west show” and keep hounding him for tickets. He does not change to try and fit in, but to avoid being hassled for tickets at every turn.

Racializing characters is not the only othering that is seen in the play. Characters that were Southern were frequently presented as ignorant and foolish. Southern was generally equated to rural as opposed to the more industrialized North, a characterization still present in contemporary American culture. While Texas was viewed as part of the Western frontier, it also had another connotation. As a Confederate state, Texas would have been seen as a Southern state and the Brander family is negatively marked by this affiliation. Brander maintains many of his traits as a country bumpkin outsider, things that make him a model of American identity, yet he is able to overcome the negative stigma of being Southern. Over the course of the play, he retains his brash, straightforward approach, but he physically leaves the South. While Washington D.C. is not the most Northern of cities, it was the heart of the Union. In moving to the capitol, Brander reinforces his identity as an independent outsider. In the play’s second act, he proclaims his wish to go back to Texas, but by the play’s end Brander has learned how to navigate his new surroundings and he wants to stay in Washington. Brander maintains the positive bumpkin attributes of a Southerner while acquiescing to the superiority of the North.

One of the key elements to defining American identity is defining what it is not. While earlier American plays like *The Contrast* were completely whitewashed, there is an increasing number of depictions of Black characters in American theatre. This increase in no way signals equality. The American Black population is technically free, but they are still treated as property. There are multiple Black characters in *A Texas Steer*. They are present in part because
of the popularity of minstrel shows. *A Texas Steer* contains far fewer musical interludes than most of Hoyt’s plays, but the minstrel elements were undoubtedly a big draw. The action in the play basically stops for a minstrel show before continuing.\(^{264}\) In addition to providing musical numbers, the Black characters are also present for comic relief and to fill out the class spectrum in the play.

One of the more intriguing characters in the play is Othello Moore, a Black servant at the hotel where Brander lives in Washington.\(^{265}\) Like the other Black characters in the play, Othello was originally played by a White actor in blackface. However, Othello is not a standard, degrading minstrel character. He speaks in a dialect, but it is not as heavy as the other Black characters, and his language choices are more refined than the newly arrived Texans. Othello is decidedly Northern and acts to show the audience how backwards Southerners can be. The Black population is not seen as equal to the White population in the North and neither is the Southern population. Both Southerners and the Black population are viewed as being below the Northern White man.

Othello specifically states that one of his duties is to manage the newly arrived Southerners, “de proprietor told me dat dose Texas folks what’s got dis yer suite o’ rooms ain’t tame yet and I was to look out fo’ ‘em” (pg. 18; act 2). He is clearly presented as being far cleverer than Fishback. After their initial encounter, Othello comments, “somebody’s been stringin’ dat fellow” (pg. 18; act 2). It takes Othello less than a minute to realize what Fishback

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\(^{264}\) The action halting in a play by means of a plot contrivance that introduces a song and dance was certainly not a new development. English Restoration plays regularly worked in musical numbers to entertain their audience. The concept here is the same. Minstrel shows were the height of musical entertainment during this period, so that was the form of the musical interlude.

\(^{265}\) Like most manners plays, the characters’ names reference a key component of their identity. Maverick Brander is a maverick leaving his brand on the country. He is also a cattleman who would brand his herd. Bossy is, well bossy. Othello Moore’s name is derived from Shakespeare’s Moorish general, Othello. Besides merely providing amusement to the audience, Othello’s name indicates that the character is not a buffoon, but of a more noble and intellectual bent.
has still not figured out, that he has been used and has needlessly traveled hundreds of miles to make a fool of himself. This is not just an ongoing racist joke, but also a comment on Southern foolishness. A Northern Black man can clearly see that Fishback is a fool and Othello is meant to be seen as superior to Fishback. Othello’s superiority does not end with Fishback. While Brander quickly adapts to his new surroundings, upon arrival he has much to learn and is inferior to Othello. One of Othello’s stage directions after Brander recounts his elevator adventures is that he “exits laughing” (pg. 19; act 2). While this social standing is only temporary until Brander can become wise to the ways of the North, it is significant.

It was frequently assumed in the post-Civil War era, that Northern society was more advanced than in the South. The joke Hoyt presents is that Northern culture at its lowest rung, represented as a Black servant, is still superior to the newly arrived Southerners. It reinforces the North and South divide and in the post-Civil War era required Northern deference. It is fine that Brander is Southern, but he has to profess the merits and superiority of the North. In doing this, Brander maintains his own outsider appeal, but is stripped of any lingering Confederate ties. While the memory of the country being split is still fresh, it is essential for Brander and the American identity to be firmly attached to the Union.
Figures

A NEW STORY BY MRS. STOWE.

Week after next we propose to commence in the Era, the publication of a new story by Mrs. H. B. Stowe, the title of which will be, "Uncle Tom's Cabin, or the Man that was a Thing." It will probably be of the length of the Tale by Mrs Southworth, entitled Retribution.

Mrs Stowe is one of the most gifted and popular of American writers. We announce her story in advance, that none of our subscribers, through neglect to renew their subscriptions, may lose the beginning of it, and that those who desire to read the production as it may appear in successive numbers of the Era, may send us their names in season.

[fig. 7] National Era’s announcement of the serial that would prove to be a tremendous hit. “A New Story by Mrs. Stowe,” The National Era (Washington DC) May 15, 1851, pg. 78.

[fig. 8] The Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion. Published by Milton Bradley & Co. From the Beinecke Digital Collections, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
CHAPTER 5
America Ascendant

Charging into the twentieth century, America’s Industrial Revolution was still in full swing. The era was bringing about exciting new inventions and developments, but the pitfalls of mass industrialization were also becoming apparent. The change from a primarily agrarian economy to a manufacturing economy did not save the country from its frequent recessions and depressions. The last decade of the nineteenth century (roughly 1893-1897) contained the worst economic downturn to that point in the country’s history.\textsuperscript{266} The difficulty from that depression, and also the ailments of the industrial age, brought about a period of government and social activism that would set the groundwork for the new century. The Progressive Era is a time of great political change that is seen in all aspects of society and is clearly reflected in the theatre of the day. The United States is also increasingly drawn out of its isolationist pose by ever-encroaching world events. While the country’s military involvement in the First World War is limited, the overall role America plays and the global effects of the War are not. The Great War has a profound effect on the American (and obviously the world’s) economy and society. Those same effects will ripple through the 1920s and play a large part in the country’s most debilitating economic collapse, the Great Depression.

This chapter traverses the first half of the twentieth century leading up to the Second World War and the precipice of American culture and character becoming ascendant. The Progressive Era, the First World War, and the Great Depression serve as tent poles to discuss the changing nature of just what it means to be an American and how that is reflected in the

American character type. The growing class concerns of the country, the changing economy, the importance placed on the middle class, and the shifting demographics all play a large role in forming the ideal American identity. Philip Barry’s *The Philadelphia Story* is the featured play of the chapter, but other plays are addressed along with the ever-changing trends in the American theatre scene.

In the twentieth century, minstrelsy remains popular and other mass entertainments begin to spread. With changing immigration patterns, urban areas have an influx of immigrants outside of the Northern and Western European stock that peopled the nation in its early years. Ethnic and specialty theaters that had long been in large cities now grew and entered into the mainstream entertainment culture. The most relevant of this combination of elements is found in Vaudeville. Like minstrel shows, vaudeville was a variety act. Not only could the shows contain several elements of various cultures' comic elements, but it also appealed to a mass audience that might contain people of various origins who may or may not speak English. Vaudeville shows toured through small town America and played daily in permanent theaters in cities.\(^{267}\) It was an easily available and accessible entertainment to a diverse collection of Americans and ruled the popular entertainment scene into the 1920s. Along with vaudeville and minstrel shows, melodrama continued to be a driving force in theatre.\(^{268}\)

The advent of radio and film would take a sizable percentage of the vaudeville audience and film would usurp variety shows as the most popular form of mass entertainment in the mid-


1920s. With the unprecedented number of entertainment options available to the American public in the new century, manners plays still managed to capture an audience and were actually more prevalent than they had been in the previous century. Even plays that did not fit the full model of a manners play often had many of the same elements that satirically addressed contemporary social issues. Social issues plays and problem plays were popular throughout the Progressive Era and Depression Age, be it in comedic or purely melodramatic form. The nineteenth century saw quite a few plays in this vein, particularly dealing with alcohol, and the trend continued and flourished in an environment that embraced social reform. One of the most notable actions of the Progressive Era was the passing of the eighteenth amendment that prohibited the sale and production of alcohol. As noted in the previous chapter, temperance plays remained popular and certainly played a role in making prohibition the law of the land. While prohibition was eventually repealed with the twenty-first amendment in 1933, its inception marked a huge victory for reformers. Various issues that activists saw as social blights were addressed both through political channels and on stage. This era made great use of the theatre as a tool for social change. Along with temperance plays, the American theatre was introduced to many of the problem plays of Ibsen and Shaw and a generation of American playwrights who addressed the problems they perceived in society.

The Progressive Era encompasses several diverse political movements. In modern times these varied movements are grouped together, but the variety of the causes were great and

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269 To the modern eye, the advent of film seems like an obvious usurper of vaudeville. While film certainly cut into the market for cheap family entertainment, the growing popularity and availability of radio cannot be overlooked. The first radio broadcast did not occur until the 1920s (there is some disagreement on when and where this happened exactly, but it was the early 1920s), but according to the 1930 census, over twelve million American families reported owning a radio and by 1940, 73% of Americans own a radio. U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999 20th Century Statistics*, “Section 31 20th Century Statistics,” pg. 885, table 1440.

through today’s political lens would span the spectrum from liberal to conservative ventures. It is a unique period because people of varying intents often found themselves working together in the pursuit of reform. Despite different views and motivations, it marks a time when it became apparent to the populous that the country had changed vastly and the government as it existed, was not equipped to deal with the drastic changes that the Industrial Revolution had wrought. In 1850 60% of the population was involved in agriculture, by 1900, only 40%. Agriculture GNP also fell from 40% to 20% during the same 50 years span. No longer was it a country of small farmers, but of massive corporations, corporations that had more power than any farmer from the nineteenth century could have imagined.

Between 1901 and 1915, more than thirteen million immigrants came to America. That is more than arrived in the previous thirty years. The increase in industry relied on cheap labor. This caused large internal migration to manufacturing areas as well as immigrants streaming into industrial areas. The increase in manufacturing depended on a supply of workers that did not have better options. In other words, taking advantage of the very poor who were desperate for employment. Many studies on this era of American development note the figure that the 1920 census marked the first time that the United States was more urban than rural. While that is technically accurate, this statement merits a bit more unpacking.

The 1920 census is the first that marks the nation’s population as being a majority urban as opposed to rural, with 54,157,973 out of 105,710,620 being classified as urban dwellers. That is around 51%. The rural population was 51,552,647 equaling approximately 49% of the

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population. While this is a significant statistic, and marks a definite and continuing trend in America’s population, it is important to note just what the census bureau deems “urban”. The shift in the 1920 census is noted in many studies, but the concept of what is rural and what is urban has changed in the minds of most people as American society has moved and increased. The Census considers areas of population of 2,500 or more to be urban, with rural areas falling into areas below this number. While towns of 2,500 or more do mark a significant change from a society that once had towns of a few hundred or less, it is not what is contemporarily thought of as urban to hail from a town of 2,500. While this does indicate movement and a change in the style of living, it is also helpful to look at the estimates of areas over 25,000. In the 1920 census 37,770,114 lived in cities over 25,000, so nearly 36%. The percentage of people living in towns of over 25,000 triples from the data from the 1860 census, but in sheer numbers is ten times as many with only 3,765,127 living in cities in 1860. These numbers are presented because the percentages do not tell the whole story. The percentage of people moving into urban areas each decade rises rather steadily at about 4-6%, but the increase in population, largely increases the total number of people and while the population of cities rises, their infrastructure does not increase at the same pace.273

During the turn of the century, as cities grew exponentially and beyond their infrastructure, the middle and upper classes were concerned about the constantly increasing lower class. While the poor were necessary to work in the factories that made the rich richer, and allowed a few to rise in class, they were seen as undesirable and in a sense feared; if not the

273 The 1910 census recorded a population of 92,228,531 with 42,064,001 or 45.6% living in an area of 2,500 or more and 28,556,633 or 31% living in towns of over 25,000. This of course, leaves over half of the population living in rural areas. By 1930 there was a total population of 122,775,046 reported with an urban population of 68,954,823 or around 56%. Cities over 25,000 were populated by 49,242,877 or 40%, leaving a rural population of 53,820,223 or nearly 44%. Social Explorer Dataset, “Census 1910,” “Census 1930,” digitally transcribed by Inter-university Consortium for political and Social Research, edited, verified by Michael Haines, compiled, edited and verified by Social Explorer.
actual people, then the idea of the people. Many of them were immigrants. There was concern that they may be unruly and riot and that they might join together and overthrow those that lived comfortably. While many reformers had humanitarian concerns for the health and well being of the poor, others had more self-serving interests.

There was a legitimate concern about the effects the lower class’s squalid living conditions could have on the upper classes. American cities were not prepared for the influx of population they received entering the twentieth century. Within a few years, entire populations doubled and there was not sufficient housing or infrastructure for this increase. In 1890, the population of Chicago was 1,099,850, and by 1920 it was 2,701,705. Detroit’s 1890 population, 205,876 grew to 993,078 by 1920, and in that same time span Los Angeles grew from 50,395 to 576,673. Sanitation was not a strength of early America and in the poorest sections of America's growing cities, it was abysmal. The idea of germ theory being incorporated into public sanitation was a young concept at this point. There was not adequate housing, which led to people packing into apartments or creating their own shelters. On top of this, there frequently was not an adequate sewer system or water supply in these densely populated areas. In addition to these being inhumane living conditions, they also bred disease, which could be spread to other

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276 These are not merely cherry picked examples, but representative of the large change seen in many of America’s biggest cities. I have specifically left out New York City because it was incorporating the boroughs during this time, which would skew the population figures. Campbell Gibson, “Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990, Table 12 [1890] and Table 15 [1920],” *U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Washington D.C., 1998.*
areas of the city. 277 While many were concerned for the lives of the poor, there was also self-interest in protecting the upper classes from diseases that developed and thrived in over packed sections of the city.

The Progressive Era was the time of muckraking journalism, akin to today’s investigative reporters, who sought to uncover societal ills in the hope of bringing awareness to pressing issues and hopefully having them addressed. 278 One of the biggest successes to come from muckraking was the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. The claims of various drugs and the quality of food had been investigated multiple times, but author Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1906), a novel about the Chicago meat industry, brought the issues to a wider audience and a bill was ultimately drafted and implemented by Congress. 279 This eventually led to the FDA and the inspection of food and the claims of drug makers. The patent medicine shows talked about in the previous chapter could no longer claim to cure cancer, though they did carry on with vaguer claims.

Playwrights took an active role in addressing social blights as well. The works of Ibsen and Shaw were causing a sensation in American theatres, dealing with prostitution, venereal disease, and corruption. American playwright Clyde Fitch (1865-1909) also dealt with social

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277 Water supplies were frequently polluted with sewage, which could contaminate the water supply with waterborne diseases. Once water treatment in urban water works improved so did the public health. Outbreaks of typhoid and cholera were lessened by treated water. Melosi, 136-148.

278 The sincerity, or the exact motives for muckrakers, of course, varied. Some were no doubt more invested than others, while some were following a journalism trend and wanted to be published. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age Of Reform: From Bryan To F.D.R.*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) 185-212.

279 In addition to Sinclair’s work, there had also been cases of people dying from eating tainted meat, most notably American soldiers in the Spanish American War who had been fed spoiled and embalmed meat. The Pure Food and Drug Act was signed into law by President and Spanish American War veteran Theodore Roosevelt. For Sinclair and the Pure Food and Drug Act see, John Whiteclay Chambers, *The Tyranny Of Change: America In The Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992) 181. For embalmed meat see, H.W. Brands, *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism 1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday, 2010) 580.
issues and was one of the most popular and prolific writers of the era.\textsuperscript{280} His plays had a manners element to them in the light satirical humor that he employed, but his plays leaned toward the more purely melodramatic.

On a lighter note than Ibsen and less melodramatic than Fitch, comedies also focused on the fast changing society and the ensuing social issues. One of the more compelling aspects of manners plays are their contemporaneity. With \textit{A New York Idea} (1906), Langdon Mitchell delivers a play that addresses the changing values from the nineteenth to the twentieth century America through the growing issue of divorce. The play made quite a splash upon its debut with many praising its biting satire, and others troubled by its scandalous subject matter. The \textit{San Francisco Chronicle} praised the, “desperate seriousness” of the play with its, “audacity to deliberately castigate us over the footlights.”\textsuperscript{281} The reviewer from the \textit{New York Tribune} took the opposing view. He most decidedly did not like the play and takes particular offense of divorce being assigned to New York City,\textsuperscript{282} though Mitchell and other reviewers note that the play could take place in any American city and even be titled, “An American Idea.”\textsuperscript{283} The bigger argument was similar to the charges leveled against Ibsen and Shaw, that the subject matter was not appropriate. \textit{The Tribune} reviewer remarked that, “the theatre is not the place for

\textsuperscript{280} In just under twenty years as a working playwright in the last and first decades of the fin de siècle, Fitch wrote and/or adapted sixty-two plays. Like Hoyt, Fitch preferred to direct his own plays and made a lucrative profit from his work. Fitch’s life was cut short by appendicitis. Kim Mara, “Clyde Fitch,” \textit{American Playwrights, 1880-1945: A Research and Production Sourcebook}, William W. Demastes ed. (Westport CT: Greenwood Press 1995) 80-90.

\textsuperscript{281} “Mrs. Fiske Wins in New Comedy,” \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, Jun 11, 1907, 7.


\textsuperscript{283} In an interview published in the \textit{New York Times}, Mitchell states that while the play is titled a \textit{New York Idea}, it could have been titled after any major United States city and was meant to reference the state of marriage and divorce in the whole of the country. "The New York Idea of Marriage and Divorce," \textit{New York Times}, Nov 25, 1906, SM 4.
discussion of such themes.”  

A reviewer from the *New York Times* shared a similar sentiment noting, “the impropriety of conditions which made his subject possible.”

Despite some of the concerns of displaying social issues on the stage, the play was a success and attracted large audiences including current president Theodore Roosevelt.

Like most manners plays there are misunderstandings, confused identities, and just missed encounters, but there is also a dissection of the social dynamics of the Progressive Era. Briefly, *A New York Idea* focuses on Cynthia Karslake, who is about to marry Philip Phillimore, an upstanding New York City judge from a well-to-do family. The wedding is to be a small affair because both of them have been married before. In fact, their divorces are rather recent. The whole theme of the play deals with divorce, both the good and bad aspects. It is a satire on how frequent divorces have become in the city and how it has trivialized marriage. There are multiple times in the play where Mitchell makes it clear that there is a time for divorce, but the overall idea is that it is taken too lightly.

Complicating the matter for Cynthia and Philip, for there are always complications, are their former spouses. It is quite clear and plainly stated that Cynthia loved her first husband, John Karslake, and does not love Philip and Philip is aware of this. She has chosen to marry Philip because he is the practical choice. He is logical and dependable, if a bit boring. John on the other hand is more spirited and unpredictable. Through a series of entanglements, Cynthia decides not to marry Philip, is concerned that John might marry Philip’s ex, Vida, and ultimately and happily discovers that her divorce never went through and that she is still married to John. Charming and broaching on witty, John gets the girl that he never wanted to divorce in the first place, and

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Philip gets nothing, but likely societal embarrassment. What is interesting here is that in an earlier time, maybe just ten to twenty years previous, Philip could have easily been the man of choice, but here he is made to be boring and old fashioned, perhaps a sign for what is to come in the genre’s character types and the concept of American identity in the twentieth century.

There is no obvious country bumpkin or truewit in the play. Cynthia is the lead character and though the play centers on her, she is still dependent on the actions and choices of the men around her. While American theatre continues to enlarge the roles of women and make them more complete and important characters, they still do not have much agency. As that is largely the case in society as well, it is not that surprising. What is changing is the depiction of female characters that are aware of their lack of agency and their growing displeasure with that fact. This too mirrors what is happening in American society with the women’s suffrage movement and the general push for women’s rights during the Progressive Era. *A New York Idea* is being analyzed because it deals with the myriad of issues in the Progressive Era, as well as showing how the types are changing in the frantically changing society. Much is learned by seeing what the characters are not. Philip is far too polished and inside society to be a country bumpkin, but he does have several of the type’s traits while truewit traits can be seen in John. John easily sees through the facades of the phony characters, Vida in particular.

From the scene directions from the very first Act, it is clear that Mitchell is setting up a group of characters as representing the old world, in this case the nineteenth century, even

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287 This foreshadows *The Philadelphia Story*’s Tracy Lord and her marriage predicaments.

though the play is set and written in the early years of the twentieth century. The Phillimore house and its residents are living in the past. Mitchell manages to describe the house with the term “old-fashioned” three times in the first six sentences of the play. The play is from the Progressive Era and shows the split in the old and the new at the change of the century and the quick developments of the Industrial Revolution. *A New York Idea* illustrates how much of the country is living in the past, but that things need to be adapted to the ever-changing present. That does not mean that the emphasis is always on the new being better, but that the conventions of the past are not equipped to deal with how life is currently.

Nowhere is the old guard more apparent than in the Phillimore family. As in the previously analyzed manners plays, the importance of money and social standing are on display in *A New York Idea*. There are multiple references that indicate the wealth and social standing of the characters while at the same time giving contemporaneous references to the play’s time period. Mr. Phillimore and his ex, Vida, own B. and O. railroad stock, one of the older lines in the country and there is also much discussion of a Sargent portrait of Mrs. Karslake owned by her former husband.289 On the other end of the spectrum, Phillimore speaks of John Karslake commenting that, “he is dead, or the next thing to it – for he’s bankrupt” (pg. 19; act 1).290

Mitchell passes judgment on both young and old members of the upper class that look down upon the lower classes. All of the characters that behave in a way that is in disdain of others because of their social class are presented as fools. Vida Phillimore is described as being, “wearied by the ignorance of the lower classes” (pg. 58; act 2) and Mrs. Phillimore (Philip’s

289 John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) was a famous artist of the period who was well known for his idealized portraits of well-to-do women. While he did more than portraits of wealthy women, and his work is still highly respected and valued today, during this period it would have been a prized social accomplishment to have a portrait by Sargent.

mother) states, “I don’t like common people any more than I like common cats” (pg. 55; act 1). Vida is manipulative and worse than that, conspicuous in her machinations and Philip’s mother is useless and self-important. Cynthia, very much the modern woman, shows clear dislike for the old order’s snobbery. While she plans to marry into the family, because of Philip’s decided lack of drama, the ridiculousness of the social rules irritate her. Even without a marriage to Philip, Cynthia is from a good family and her previous husband was as well, however they are presented as being far less stuffy. They are much more creatures of the new century. She still has an awareness of and follows social customs, she is just more open to change, major concepts of the Progressive era.  

Philip is not as grievously flawed or as foolish as his family, but he is tied to the old way of doing things and it marks him as pompous and outdated. When speaking to an affronted Philip before his wedding, John (Cynthia’s ex) tells Philip that he must, “get down to earth of the present day. Rufus Choate and Daniel Webster are dead. You must be modern” (pg. 120; act 3). He continues, “you’re asleep; you’re living in the dark ages. You want to call up Central. ‘Hello. Central! Give me the present time, 1906, New York!’” (pg. 121; act 3). If written a few decades earlier, it is easy to see how Philip could have easily been the hero or dominating American type. 

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291 Higham 177, deals with the split between those embracing change and people that thought there was too much change in the period. 

292 One of the more interesting references to Phillimore’s outdated mode of thought becomes clear when he comments on the contemporary political scene. Philip, who is a judge, espouses a negative opinion of those who might harm the cause of big business and when reading the evening paper comments, “shocking attack by the president on vested interests. Hm – too bad – but it’s to be expected. The people insisted on electing a desperado to the presidential office – they must take the hold-up that follows” (act 1). While it can easily be argued that Teddy Roosevelt was not the trust buster that he was billed as being, and in fact had a fairly cooperative relationship with corporations, he was a champion of the Progressive Era and frequently referred to as the trust buster president. Roosevelt is not that liberal or extreme and this speaks to Phillimore’s clinging to old modes of thought. For the reformatory acts from Roosevelt’s presidency see, David B. Sicilia, “Business,” A Companion To 20th-century America, Stephen J. Whitfield, ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004) 380. For Roosevelt’s friendliness towards business see, Richard Hofstadter, The Age Of Reform: From Bryan To F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) 243-245. For Roosevelt’s trust buster title and the reality of him being a moderate see, Chamber 176-78.
in this play. He is rich and sensible. His reactions at being troubled by his fiancée disappearing with another man on a frivolous outing on her wedding day, and making a wager that her ex-husband would not be bold enough to give her away at said wedding are logical and full of common sense. Yet, that is not enough. He is continually called out, either by the other characters or through the playwright’s directions on being old fashioned or out of touch. The times are changing and so is the American type.

Mitchell is not merely clamoring for everything to be more modern. While he is pointing out the absurdities of old fashioned social conventions, he is also making the point that modern is not equivalent to good. The play is peppered with comments on the prevalence of divorce in New York Society. Phillimore’s brother Matthew is a preacher and speaks fondly upon a sermon he has given about the “necessity” of divorce and that during the service, “All New York was there! And all New York went away happy!” (pg. 23; act 1). On meeting her fiancé’s ex-wife, Cynthia notes that, “If people in our position couldn’t meet, New York society would soon come to an end” (pg. 28; act 1).

Through Cynthia, Mitchell shows the problem with marriage in that a woman can absolutely be trapped. While she is not yet married to Philip, she has spent enough time with him to know what her future holds, “I’m crying inside, and dying inside and outside and everywhere” (pg. 129; act 3). While her situation is not as dire as many, her situation will basically leave her life without purpose. It speaks to the bigger issue within marriage for many women. While divorce might be a necessity, Mitchell does not want it to be taken lightly. The New York Idea is the concept that marriages are not forever and that they are easily entered into and even more easily exited through divorce. Mitchell is showing the extremes of both sides and is arguing for a compromise in the middle. In this way, *A New York Idea* (though lighter in tone) addresses a
current social issue like other problem plays of the period and with dealing with the cultural climate foreshadows some of the upcoming shifts in the American character type.

Progressive Era America at the turn of the nineteenth century did not just contain changes to America's social and economic structure, but its relationship with the rest of the world. After its connection with England, for years all the country wanted was to be let alone as its own entity. This was then followed by a period where the United States sought validation as an independent nation, for largely economic reasons as it wanted to be seen as a respected trade partner. Up to this point the nation had attempted to be isolationist in regards to not getting involved in the political issues of Europe and the rest of the world as it had its own internal issues with the Civil War, Reconstruction, and a severe economic crisis in the 1890s. The country was able to maintain this isolationist stance in large part because of its geography. The United States had vast oceans separating it from the troubles of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and the nation was large enough, and contained enough natural resources to remain out of the fray for long stretches of time. Moving forward, the United States sought a broader market and a more powerful role in world affairs. This new era would see a dramatic increase in foreign relations, with a large effect at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{293}

The United States had been inching towards becoming an imperial nation for years, but by the end of the Spanish American War it was no longer a quest; it was done. America was now an imperial nation and had become the thing that it had fought for years to break away from. The Spanish American War brings in the age of American imperialism with the country taking control of Spanish island colonies in the Pacific: Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam.\textsuperscript{294} The

\textsuperscript{293} Chambers 201-206

\textsuperscript{294} There was a sizable contingent of powerful Americans, including Andrew Carnegie, who were against these acts of colonialism, but President William McKinley won that battle and fully ushered in the age of American imperialism.
war began and ended in 1898 and the United States officially took over in 1899.295 The United States also officially takes over Hawaii in 1898.296 This would have obvious political and economic effects, and it would also change the nature of American identity and the development of the character types. The twentieth century is abundant with change, even for the country bumpkin.297

Another aspect of the Progressive Era that is important to point out is the growing reliance on experts. For years, the nation has valued “common sense” and basic logic as the preferred elements of knowledge. However, in a period where many reforms are being attempted, the reformers look to experts for answers, experts as in people who have been specifically educated on a particular subject.298 This was true in almost every field imaginable from agriculture to government. Farmers started reaping the benefits of implementing science into their crops and livestock,299 while new political theories based on a learned bureaucracy.

American forces battled the Filipinos for the next two years before the United States gained complete control and factions on the island would continue to revolt for years. Chambers, 47-48.

295 The Treaty of Paris (1898) ended the war and it was ratified in 1899.

296 A group of Americans who ran sugar plantations on the islands wanted Hawaii to be part of America so that they would not have to pay import tariffs. The planters overtook the Hawaiian government in 1893 and basically controlled the islands until the United States officially took control. For more on Hawaii see, Merze Tate, The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Political History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) and Jon Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio, Dismembering Lāhui: A History Of The Hawaiian Nation To 1887, (Honolulu: University Of Hawaiʻi Press, 2002).


299 Hofstadter, 114.
came to the forefront.\textsuperscript{300} This is important because of the general nature to eschew higher education and book learned knowledge. The idea of “common sense” is still more popular, but the door has been reopened to the importance of learned knowledge. At best it is the start to embrace a more knowledgeable type, and at minimum a less hostile response to education and dare I say, wit?

Social unrest, class conflict, race riots, and economic downturn were all temporarily squashed with America’s entrance into the First World War. This does not mean it was an entirely popular war.\textsuperscript{301} On the political front, there was much concern over whether the United States should involve itself in international concerns, but the country had already invested so much capital in the Allies that there was a great financial need for them to win. Before the United States officially entered the war as a combatant, it was the American private sector that was financing and supplying the war. The government would come in later, but the power brokers of major American corporations and financial institutions were the initial suppliers.\textsuperscript{302}

While America claimed neutrality in the first years of World War One, that stance was far from accurate. United States soldiers were not yet involved in combat, president Wilson was claiming neutrality and clamoring to broker peace between the two sides, and the nation had not declared war, but the United States was supplying arms, food, and loans (so the Allies could continue to buy supplies of course).\textsuperscript{303} Can you really be neutral if you are the prime supplier of


\textsuperscript{301} For more on the lead up to America’s entrance into the war see, Justus D. Doenecke, \textit{Nothing Less Than War: A New History Of America’s Entry Into World War I} (Lexington, KY: University Press Of Kentucky, 2011).


\textsuperscript{303} For a more international view on the war’s financing see, Hew Strachan, \textit{Financing The First World War} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
one side? While American bankers made some loans to Germany, they were paltry compared to the billions loaned out to the Allies.\textsuperscript{304} The United States spent approximately 30-35 billion on the war,\textsuperscript{305} but through its financial maneuvering through the First World War, America changed its place from a debtor nation to an international banking powerhouse.\textsuperscript{306}

Production of weapons and ammunition was high and farms increased output to feed England and France. For those that were not won over by economic gains, the Espionage Act of 1917 was enacted with the addition of the Sedition Act in 1918. With these laws, the government could arrest anyone who was vocally against the war. Those found guilty could be imprisoned for up to 20 years.\textsuperscript{307} The government did not hesitate to use this law, and it basically destroyed the Socialist Party in America and the Industrial Workers of the World (also known as the Wobblies) union.\textsuperscript{308} Discrimination and propaganda against the Central Powers was also rampant. Any signs of Germaness were stripped as people of German ancestry were harassed and sometimes killed.\textsuperscript{309} Long before there were freedom fries,\textsuperscript{310} sour kraut was temporarily renamed liberty cabbage.

\textsuperscript{304} Otis L. Graham, \textit{The Great Campaigns: Reform And War In America, 1900-192} (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971) 64.

\textsuperscript{305} Glen Gendzel, “1914-1929,” \textit{A Companion To 20th-century America}, Stephen J. Whitfield, ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004) 23. There are variations on the amount America spent on the war, with some estimates in the 32-33 billion range, but the figure generally falls within the 30-35 billion range.


\textsuperscript{307} With these laws, the government was able to quiet dissidence. This power included monitoring and censoring the mail, arresting strikers for not contributing to the war effort, and in general, silencing any who questioned the war or the government’s actions. Maureen A. Flanagan, \textit{America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 234-241.

\textsuperscript{308} Chambers 269

Barbarism comes to equal not White. Germans, who had been considered white up until the war, were suddenly recast as dark skinned brutes, literally as gorillas [see fig. 9 and 10]. After the war this marking was removed, so color was not just seen as a physical trait, but as a sign of being less than human. This gives a sign as to how the concepts of discrimination and class worked in the country. People of color: be they Black, Latin/Latina, American Indian, and even more olive tone skinned immigrants of Southern Europe were automatically seen as less than just by visual cues, but that did not make all those of Northern and Western European backgrounds White either. Northern and Western Europeans were given better odds because of their physical appearance, but there were still many elements that could challenge their claim to Whiteness. One had to be the right kind of White. This serves to show the constructed nature of race and the part it plays in American identity. Not only is it something that is purely fabricated, but also the individual cannot define it for him or herself. It is a mass construction built by the few who base the concept on their idealized self. In other words, a White skinned, privileged male.

The stretch of the First World War quelled much of the growing class violence struggles. These issues still existed, but a combination of nationalism, at times coerced, and a busying of the economy worked to tamp down the volume of those concerns. After the war, the emphasis on Americanism was high and the sedition and espionage acts that were put into place in wartime remained. Immigration reform limited those that were deemed "outsiders." Ironically, while Germans were highly discriminated against during this period, their immigration was not the concern. Northern and Western Europeans were the preferred origin of immigrants, and while

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310 When France voiced displeasure with the United States invading Iraq (2000s edition) many restaurants renamed French fries, freedom fries.
Germans were literally depicted as being non White, even nonhuman, during the war (as apes) they soon returned to their "White" status.\(^{311}\)

The National Origins Act of 1924 brings into law the constructed idea of American identity, aka White, and favors the immigration of people from Western and Northern Europe. The immigration of these people is preferred as opposed to people of color and Southern and Eastern European (possibly Catholic) immigrants that had been the majority of people coming to America.\(^{312}\)

The act worked on a quota system, which was not entirely new, as some form of quotas had been used since 1921. However, the new law brought further restrictions in the way the quotas were figured. Originally, visas could be offered to 3% of the amount of foreign-born immigrants in the country from their nation of origin. In the new law, visas were based on a larger portion of the population, including those born in the United States. These alterations of the law led to more immigrants from Western and Northern Europe being permitted to immigrate than those from other regions of the world. With this Act, we see that the construction of the American identity is not just in theatre or literature, but the government is taking an active role in trying to create aspects of this identity.\(^{313}\)

The end of the war brought about a temporary slowdown to the booming economy. Arms did not need to be manufactured at a startling rate and there were no longer huge armies for American farmers to feed. Temporary workers were put out of work when men returned and

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\(^{311}\) Higham 304


farms had an incredible surplus, but the economy regulated in the aftermath of the war and was far better than before the war. Unemployment was down, wages were up, and there were all sorts of new products for the public to buy. In the 1920s the very poor were still poor while the rich increased their wealth exponentially. However, the middle class was growing which helped to alleviate some of the class battles. The majority of the population was making a bit more, and being able to afford and buy more was enough for the comfortable masses to overlook the widening gap between the richest and the poorest.\footnote{On the economic slowdown and upward trend in consumerism after the war see, Ian Purchase, “Normalcy, Prosperity, and Depression, 1919-1933,” America’s Century: Perspectives on U.S. History Since 1900, Ian Morgan and Neil Wynn eds. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993) 53-55. For the different effects on laborers and the emerging white collar worker see, C. Wright Mills, White Collar: The American Middle Classes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, c1951). For more on social unrest and displaced women and black workers on the return of soldiers after the war see, Flanagan 237-241.}

As the price of automobiles went down, more and more American families purchased. In 1910 there were an estimated 458,000 passenger cars registered to Americans, in 1920 that number increased to 8,132,000, and in 1925 it more than doubled to 17,481,000.\footnote{U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999 20th Century Statistics, “Section 31 20th Century Statistics,” pg. 885, table 1439.} Cars were no longer just for the wealthy. Middle and working class people could now join in the ranks of auto owners. The price of automobiles had dropped substantially. Ford’s Model T cost over eight hundred dollars in 1909, but had dropped to three hundred and ten by 1921.\footnote{David E. Kyvig, Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002) 23-25.} The dropping price of automobiles played a substantial part in the middle class being able to afford them, but more significantly, buying with credit was becoming more common.\footnote{Kyvig 25} Consumerism had a way of placating people. The masses might never reach the wealth and power of the 1%, but they could manage to attain the next new thing to bolster their class standing with bought badges of

\begin{quote}
\footnotetext[1]{On the economic slowdown and upward trend in consumerism after the war see, Ian Purchase, “Normalcy, Prosperity, and Depression, 1919-1933,” America’s Century: Perspectives on U.S. History Since 1900, Ian Morgan and Neil Wynn eds. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993) 53-55. For the different effects on laborers and the emerging white collar worker see, C. Wright Mills, White Collar: The American Middle Classes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, c1951). For more on social unrest and displaced women and black workers on the return of soldiers after the war see, Flanagan 237-241.}
\end{quote}
wealth. This panacea disguised the ever-growing wealth gap between rich and poor that would continue to grow until the economic collapse of the Great Depression.

The first quarter of the American Century starts the gradual shift from a manufacturing economy to a consumer economy. In other words, the country’s economy is developing in a way that requires the populace to always be consuming, or buying goods. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (1899) Thorstein Veblen, an economist and sociologist, posits his theory of conspicuous consumption. The theory has since been used and adapted by many theorists. The basic concept is that consuming is a goal in and of itself and not the actual need for the item obtained. The purpose of this consumerism is to display that one can consume. The message that the consumption puts forth is that by consuming, the purchaser proves that he or she has the means to consume. Consumption is a sign of wealth and social class, so the procurement of items denotes a level of social standing. The theory was originally applied to the wealthy, but also proved quite useful for other class levels with the middle class striving to prove their arrival or that they were wealthier than they actually were. Somewhat ironically, this sort of consumption serves to point out that the consumer is not of old wealth, but “new rich” or trying to appear wealthy to hide the actualities of their finances. To make a long story short, in a consumer economy conspicuous consumption rises and the only purpose of the consumption is to prove that one can consume. The whole point is to consume, the object to be obtained is not needed accept to serve as proof of the consumption. The effect on the economic system is clear, but it also has implications on the idea of the American character.318

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To this point the American type has been independent and straightforward. These traits do not change, but many of the surrounding elements do. Previous incarnations of the type have generally been successful farmers, or in Brander’s case a cattleman. Now the man of the land transitions into a man of business. This type is still independent and largely self-made, but in the change in the economic structure we can see the change in the type and vice versa. The American ideal is no longer the man marshaling the land, but commanding the industrial world. He is not a rural, but a creature that is comfortable in town and country who is busy shaping the business world. The core elements of the type remain: he is self-made, independent, and straightforward. As always, he is also white and wealthy. What has changed is how the type reaches success, or in reality what the definition of success is in the twentieth century.319

In some ways, consumerism brought about an equality that here to fore did not exist in America. Consumerism wanted everyone, Black, White, men and women. This is not to say that the marketplace was in anyway equal, Black and ethnic areas often had their own, segregated businesses and markets, but all people were active in the consumer economy. You may not be rich, you may never be a member of the social elite, but maybe you could attain some of the same goods. Consumption became the optimum sign of class mobility and identity. You are what you buy. It also further emphasized the class lines. For a "classless" society, the class structure had never been so obvious as it was in the rising consumer economy.320

The United States government and infrastructure did not change as quickly as the economy. In a relatively short span, the economy had transitioned from agriculturally focused, to

319Ibid. 337-339

manufacturing, and finally to a consumer economy. The country’s structure had been based to deal with an agrarian society, with good reason as that had been the main economy since colonial times. The shift was quick, within generations, and eventually the on the fly patches were not enough. Things came crashing down inevitably in 1929 with the Great Depression.321

Recessions, panics, and depressions were nothing new to the nation. They happened with regularity, the worst yet having occurred in the 1890s. There was another relatively short downturn after WWI, but nothing had prepared the United States for the size and scope of the Great Depression of the 1930s. What was so different this time? Why was the country immersed in the stolid economy for so long and what effects would it have on society going forward?

The crash of 1929 was not in and of itself entirely novel. Like crashes before and since, it was largely caused by financial speculation, people spending more than they had, banks lending out to people they should not have, and the bubble bursting. It happened with the land rush of 1837, the housing bust of 2008, the stock market crash of 1929, and no doubt will happen again (my bet is on the student loan crash of tba).322 While the stock market collapse was destructive, it was not the sole cause of the depression. The main difference with the Great Depression and previous downturns was the country’s inability to recover. The other crises had taken time, but not the years of hardship felt in the 1930s. This was in part due to the rest of the world dealing


with an economic downturn, but also with the United States government’s inability to address the problem despite a myriad of attempts.323

Speculation alone is not enough to account for the depression of the 1930s. Worth noting is the financial climate of the time before the crash. Business was booming and speculators were making a disproportionate amount of money. While the crash had an effect on the economy as a whole, it is important to realize that not everyone had money invested in the stock market. In fact, a rather small percentage was invested in the market.324 While it is frequently presented that “everyone” was playing the stock market, it was primarily the upper class, who could afford the losses, and parts of the middle class. The lower classes did not have the funds to invest in stocks and much of the middle class that invested did not sink their entire savings. The bulk of their income went to day to day survival. What is of great interest is the wealth disparity of the time [see fig. 11].325

The 1%, in actuality more like the 5% as those that fell just outside the top percent claimed roughly another third of the nation’s wealth, were becoming richer and monopolizing a large amount of the national wealth.326 Meanwhile, the poor were just as poor and were about to become poorer. The very rich, while they would lose large amounts of money, by percentage of wealth, they were still well off. The working and middle class would struggle through the 1930s.


324 Fewer than 3% of Americans owned stocks. Kennedy, 40-41.


With the New Deal, the government attempted to aid the struggling classes, with mixed results. Much of the aid provided to farmers during the depression actually further harmed the poorest agriculture workers. Government price and supply guidelines helped many larger farms and land owners, but tenant farmers often lost what little they had. As the government tasked farms with cutting supply to raise prices, the most logical thing for land owning farmers to do was eject tenant farmers, their crops no longer being profit producing, but a drawback given new government mandates to limit production. This left poor and landless farmers without a home or a profession. This is yet another example of the poor taking on the most profound loss and suffering even when the government tried to help.327

The concept of the individual, a cornerstone concept of American identity, was only accessible to the very few that were crafting the identity. The laborer was working to survive and was prisoner to the capitalist economy. The middle class did not have that same pressure, but had an ever increasing imperative to consume. The lifestyle of the middle class improved, but with that came the need to “keep up with the Joneses” and to prove their rise above the poorer class by accumulating goods. While these two classes strived to move upward or merely stay afloat, the upper class had the freedom and the money to contemplate and act on individualism.328

Many of the plays from the Progressive Era and into the Depression Age deal with the class conflicts in America; it is one of the dominant themes of the twentieth century. Plays like The Hairy Ape, Waiting for Lefty, and The Adding Machine, most likely come to mind before

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327 Kennedy 207-213

328 Ironically, the 14th amendment (meant to grant rights to newly freed slaves) was interpreted to see corporations as individuals or persons, so not only culturally, but legally, the individual as one person's identity is compromised. A large collection is now an "individual" a large grouping owned and run by the rich, the population that still espouses the rhetoric and importance of the individual. John A. Powell and Caitlin Watt, "Corporate Prerogative, Race, and Identity Under the Fourteenth Amendment" Cardozo Law Review 32.3 (2011): 885-904.
The Philadelphia Story, but it too carries a definite class commentary. While most of these plays are from the working class perspective, like most manners plays The Philadelphia Story analyzes class issues from within an upper class structure.

Besides being one of America’s most popular and enduring manners plays, The Philadelphia Story is of great interest to this study because it presents three characters that could be the male romantic lead and hero of the piece. The three characters, George Kittredge, McCauley (Mike) Connor, and C.K. Dexter Haven, are all viable options for the play’s central figure, Tracy Lord. Dexter, a rare figure in American manners plays to this point (and in truth, moving forward as well), is the quintessential truewit. He is born into wealth and high social standing, self-assured, and charming. He also has one obvious flaw, of which he is aware, that he must overcome to attain his goal. At first glance, George is the ideal of the American character. He is a hard worker who has climbed his way up in the world. He is attractive, moral, and full of good sense. Mike’s character makeup is in between Dexter and George. He too is a hard worker and solidly of the middle class, but he also has some of the self-aware charms of the truewit.

Like all manners plays, there are various complications and secret identities, but the basic plot focuses on the Lord family of Philadelphia. Tracy, a divorcée, is about to be remarried, when her ex-husband reappears. Further complicating matters, a story about her estranged father’s extra marital affair is about to be published and her brother Sandy is concocting a scheme to keep the scandalous information out of the news. Sandy makes a deal with the

329 Eugene O’Neil’s The Hairy Ape (1922) deals with a worker who feels out of place. Clifford Odets’s Waiting for Lefty (1935) centers on a potential labor strike and the conflict between workers and the capitalist structure. Elmer Rice’s The Adding Machine (1923) focuses on a worker who is going to be replaced by a machine, both in the present and in the afterlife. The main concept of the play is that the worker is meant to feel useless in the current social system. For more on playwrights exploring the relationship between society and machine see, Dennis G. Jerz, Technology in American Drama, 1920-1950: Soul and Society in the Age of the Machine (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003).
publisher and trades the story on his father for an exclusive on his sister’s wedding. As part of the deal, he brings a reporter and a photographer home with him to stay with the family as they prepare for the wedding. Sandy tells his family that they are reporters, but the reporters, Liz and Mike, do not know that the family knows that they work for the paper. Adding further layers of complication, Tracy pretends that Uncle Willie is her father, as her actual father is meant to be in New York as he was not invited to the wedding. In true manners fashion, Seth Lord (the father) does come home and quickly learns that he must pretend to be Uncle Willie. The various secrets and identities are revealed throughout the play, but of real interest to this study are the deeper implications behind the “real” and assumed identities.

Philip Barry (1896-1949) was one of the most important playwrights of his time, but much like Hoyt his work is often overlooked or now considered trivial. He is best remembered for his high society comedies, though he wrote in multiple genres and covered many themes. Even his comedies like The Philadelphia Story and the earlier Holiday deal with important issues. Critic Brook Atkinson noted in one of his articles on The Philadelphia Story that Barry always showed, “a sense of moral responsibility” in his work. Like most writers, Barry was very much shaped by his time, with World War One and the Great Depression making a strong impression. He was born into a middle class family with Irish roots and attended Yale and Harvard universities. Barry tried to join the military for the First World War, but was turned down because of his poor eyesight. Describing his inability to enlist as “unfortunate,” he

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330 This element of the play was understood to be a satire on Henry Luce, the publisher of Time and Fortune magazine. Brooks Atkinson, “Barry to Hepburn to Guild: A Recent Opening,” New York Times, April 2, 1939, 131

331 Holiday (1928) delves into the materialism of America’s capitalist structure through an examination of an upper class family and a new engagement.

332 Atkinson 131

returned to Yale in 1917 and wrote about his grief over being unable to serve. While acting as one of the editors for *Yale Literary Magazine*, Barry wrote about the experience thusly, “with a fierce resentment against certain little black letters that blurred hopelessly on a white background at a distance of fifteen feet … such petty things, we thought, to keep us from participation in so great a war.” In his work, Barry frequently is critical of American society and culture, but at the same time he is still enveloped by a sense of patriotic fervor and American ideals have been firmly ingrained and are on view in his work.

*The Philadelphia Story* made its Broadway premiere on March 28, 1939 and was both a critical and financial success. Throughout its yearlong run and its following tour, newspapers noted the play’s popularity and earnings. Barry wrote the role of Tracy Lord with Katherine Hepburn specifically in mind. There are really two leading men in the play with Mike and Dexter both vying for time and attention. In the original Broadway production Mike was played by Van Heflin, and Dexter by Joseph Cotton. When the play was adapted to a movie shortly after its theatrical run, Hepburn stayed in the part of Tracy Lord, but the male leads were recast with Jimmy Stewart in the role of Mike, and Cary Grant in the role of Dexter. Hepburn clearly had faith in the piece, because she bought the film rights to the play before it proved to be a success. The play was quite popular and after its set engagement and tour, Hepburn took it straight to Hollywood to shoot the film.

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334 One of the other editors of the magazine in 1917 was future Pulitzer Prize winner Stephen Vincent Benét.

335 Barry 1


337 The film version came out the very next year (1940) and proved to be a financial and critical success. It did well at the box office and was nominated for a number of Academy awards, winning for best adapted screenplay, and Jimmy Stewart best actor. The play was made into a movie again in 1956, this time as a musical titled *High Society*. 
Tracy Lord is the lynchpin of the play, but she still has the societal limitations that women often face and does not have full agency. In regards to women having limited agency and their worlds revolving around their husbands, Margaret comments to her daughter who has complained about her father's philandering that they should not complain as, "neither of us has proved to be a very great success as a wife," in other words, she places blame on the women for their troubled marriages. While Tracy is presented as a smart and independent woman, she still places her life's happiness on a man and marriage. If she just marries the right man she will be happy. For all the talk of her independence, Tracy sees marriage and motherhood as her only useful life choice. On her wish for having a large family she states, "Oh I hope-I do hope! - I hope I'm good for something" (pg. 114; 2.2).

Like *A New York Idea*, *Philadelphia Story* centers around a woman who has already been divorced and is on the eve of her second marriage. Manners comedies have long been focused on marriage, but being contemporary in spirit and confronting relevant social issues of the day, early twentieth century society plays also frequently featured divorce as well. Along with being a social issue, it also provides a new complication to a genre that thrives on complications. Divorces had, of course existed in the past, but the frequency and relative ease of them, created new ground for dramatists to explore. It also spoke to the growing agency of women in America, still limited in their rights, but able to have more options. This is the only play in this study that was written after women in the United States had the right to vote and not coincidentally, it is the play where female characters have the most agency. However, their actions are still largely dependent on men and they have to act within a social structure where they are given less value than men. I do not categorize women in the definition of the ideal American type because of their

lack of freedom and agency, but their growing rights have a profound effect on those around them and what does entail the ideal American identity.

As with most manners plays, there are multiple plot point swirling around the central story. Tracy’s marriage is the focus, but that thread is also intertwined with the marital issues of her parents. Barry does a great job of keeping what would have been pressing issues present in the play and uses several deft details that let the audience know exactly what kind of family he is writing about, as if the Lords were an actual old standing Philadelphia family.

The wealth and social standing of the family is expressed immediately, from the set directions describing the sitting room as having a "faded elegance" to offhand comments of having the wedding's weather insured by "Lloyd's" and having a whole page of Cadwaladers on the invite list. Barry makes a point mentioning multiple families of actual Philadelphia high society. The Cadwaladers are one of the oldest and most distinguished families in Philadelphia. While this mention gives an immediate clue to the Lord family's place in society, it also takes a dig at that society with a discussion between Dinah and Margaret:

MARGARET: This second page is solid Cadwalader. Twenty-six.

DINAH: that's a lot of Cadwalader.

MARGARET: one, my child, is a lot of Cadwalader. (pg. 5; act 1)

Barry makes mention of other big Philadelphia family names throughout the play including the Drexels, and joined to the Drexel family through marriage, the Biddles. Giving further

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338 Anthony Drexel was a banker and one of the founders of Drexel, Morgan and company, now known as J.P. Morgan. He was also the founder of Drexel University in Philadelphia. For more on Drexel see, Dan Rottenberg, The Man Who Made Wall Street: Anthony J. Drexel and the Rise of Modern Finance (Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

339 The Biddles are a prominent Philadelphia Quaker family that had been in the area since colonial times. Anthony Joseph Drexel Biddle Sr. was the subject of the play and movie entitled, The Happiest Millionaire. The family is comprised of many businessmen and military officers who served in every war mentioned in this dissertation and more. Cordelia Drexel Biddle and Kyle Crichton, My Philadelphia Father (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955).
authentication to the family's wealth and standing is their address on the Main Line, and comments noting the previous generations living on Rittenhouse square. 340

In another connection to the New York Idea, the Lord's home also features a large portrait by a notable artist, in this case, American portraitist Gilbert Stuart. He is best known for his portraits of important Americans, most notably his portrait of George Washington which is on the dollar bill. The fact that the Lords have one of his pieces points to their wealth and the stature of the family.

Barry makes many comments in the play about the elite class being useless or at least feeling useless, like they are out of date with the more progressive times. This backlash would not have been an uncommon topic for the era. Still in the midst of the Great Depression and in the time of the New Deal, the growing affluence of the very elite rankled not only the lower class, but reached up well into the struggling middle class. The upper classes were blamed by many for economic problems and for profiting while other struggled. While Barry does not completely shut down the argument that the wealthy are useless, he does portray them in a positive light. They are portrayed as being the most open minded, and while they might be ham handed at it, the most charitable and eager to help. The play also portrays the wealthy as being burdened with self-awareness where they suddenly have to think more about their wealth since the Depression and America's changing place in the world. Margaret comments that, "it's odd how self-conscious we've all become over the worldly possessions that once made us so confident" (pg. 26; act 1).

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In the earlier plays covered, there tended to be families that were ostentatious with their money or were trying to appear as though they had more money than they actually did. In this play the environment has changed because the economic reality of the country had changed. That does not mean that wealth was not something positive or necessary to truly capture American identity, but one was more aware of what certain elements of wealth projected in their meaning or what they were perceived to mean. To obviously flaunt wealth during a long lasting financial crisis was not only in poor taste, but perhaps dangerous when the majority of the population did not have the same privilege. Tracy's uncle makes a similar observation when commenting on a party that his wife is throwing for the bride when he states, "I seriously question the propriety of any such display in such times" (pg. 28; act 1). Written and performed during the depression the more well-to-do were quite aware of their fortunes and likely of the possibility of the lower classes rebelling at the unjust dispersion of wealth in the country. Being understated was self-protection for the wealthy. As a whole, the family is quite defensive of their wealth with Tracy’s brother Sandy telling the two somewhat undercover journalists that the family, "just might be fairly decent" despite the negative opinion the two have going into their investigation (pg. 33; act 1).

Upon his first appearance in the play, Dexter does not receive a warm greeting; he is after all showing up on the eve of his ex-wife's remarriage. It is also quite likely that the family reacts negatively and wants him to leave immediately because they are currently trying to fool the undercover reporters and Dexter might blow the family's cover as he would be unaware that Uncle Willie is pretending to be the family patriarch, Seth Lord. Of course once Dexter figures out that Willie is pretending to be Seth, he is happy to play along without knowing the reason. Even with those caveats, what is evident is that Dexter does inspire some actual emotion. He
seems more like a real person than George. This is not a shortcoming in the writing; Barry makes memorable characters out those that appear only briefly, it is a definite choice on the characters. George is not a real person, but something to be aspired to much like the crafted American identity he is something that is not really attainable. Dexter is a throwback to the rakish, soon to be reformed truewits of the Restoration style, just charming and unpredictable enough to make people a little nervous.

During their first interaction in the play, it seems apparent to anyone who has ever watched or read a manners play, that Tracy and Dexter will end up together. Their easy and slightly cutting banter is the clear sign that they are, “meant to be,” in the conventions of the genre. It is learned that the disillusion of the first marriage was because of Dexter's per the papers, "cruelty and drunkenness" (pg. 11; act 1). Like all truewits there must be a flaw, a flaw that can be overcome. The details of Dexter’s defect are somewhat vague, which is all the better and easier to overcome. Truewits are handsome, smart, wealthy, and charming, so they must have something to challenge them without really ever being challenged.

While Dexter’s past actions are not treated with great concern, from a modern viewpoint the issue is quite serious. It is revealed through a conversation between Margaret and Dinah that Dexter may have hit Tracy when he was drunk:

DINAH: Did he really sock her?

MARGARET: Don't say "sock," darling. "Strike" is quite an ugly enough word.

DINAH: But did he really?

MARGARET: I'm afraid I don't know the details. (pg. 10; act1)

One would hope that Margaret would be more concerned about Tracy being battered than Dinah's vocabulary, but though it is brought up again, no one seems all that concerned. Another
"funny" reference to Dexter assaulting Tracy is a conversation he has with Mike. He is surprised to learn that Mike, as a writer, is not much of a drinker, "it's extraordinary. I thought all writers drank to excess, and beat their wives. I expect that at one time I secretly wanted to be a writer" (pgs. 77-78; act 2.1). Despite these passages, Dexter is never seen as villainous and is clearly meant to be a better fit than George. George is viewed by the other characters and the audience to be a poor choice and a lesser man despite the fact that Dexter has a drinking problem and may have assaulted his wife. George may not be an ideal fit personality wise, but it is not just that he does not end up with Tracy, it is that he is received, and intended to be received so poorly.

An important aspect to notice about George is that in theory he should be the ideal American type, the very vision of American identity. However, he is not a well-liked character and does not end the play paired up with the female lead or playing an important part in the drama’s outcome. The general message in the plays and in their contemporary society has been to work hard and you too could enjoy the American dream, but each of the plays featured has had another, less obvious theme, know your place. While the very concept of the American dream is that if you work hard enough and believe, you can achieve anything, society is not set up for that and in fact is structured against that possibility. It can happen, but it is unlikely. Characters that rise in class, or attempt to, are frequently seen as being foolish and the message sent through the plays is that one should stay in their predetermined class for their own good. 

*Fashion* is the prime example of this as it is explained that the Tiffany family would have saved themselves much pain and embarrassment if they had only known their place and stayed there. This concept is not unique to American manners plays, but unlike other cultures, it goes directly against the national identity that is of the independent man in a classless society that can achieve anything. While we know that America is not really classless, that ideal persists and plays a key
component in American manners plays. This paradoxical juxtaposition plays out in *The Philadelphia Story* through the character of George Kittredge.  

Even more than Philip in *The New York Idea*, George Kittredge seems like the ideal pick to be, well the American ideal. He is a self-made man who started out as a coal miner and worked his way up to be the manager of a major coal company; an example of the American dream. Born to a poor coal mining family, but hardworking and of good sense and character, he is able to climb the corporate ladder and is on the verge of marrying into one of the oldest and most respected families in high society. By all accounts, he should be the hero of the piece. Why isn't he? To this point America has embraced the character of the independent, self-made man; the man that did not need a fancy education, but good old common sense. On paper that is what George appears to be. Closer inspection of the character as well as contemporary society reveals some significant addendums to just what is the ideal American character. The country bumpkin has been a steady presence with the banishment of the truewit's characteristics that exude too much of the European ancestry of the nation. By looking at George and Dexter and the context provided by the play we can see the attributes of the country bumpkin and the truewit start to come together to form the American type.

For a character with few appearances, George is of great importance and the audience is given quite a bit of his background information. Like all in the bumpkin family, there is a lot of talk about George's physical appearance, it is one of the first things we hear about him; notably, that he is an “angel” and “handsome” (pgs. 9, 10; act 1). While the appearance of bumpkins is usually that of someone who is out of place in terms of being messy or workman like, George’s appearance is clearly admired. The audience’s knowledge of him starts from after his

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341 While the American dream is a large concept does not have a simple, singular definition Jim Cullen’s *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), details the fundamental elements of the idea.
transformation, so the first introduction to his looks is as a man that climbed the company ladder. His good looks are a continual subject of conversation. Liz in particular comments on George's appealing looks upon meeting him:

MIKE: How are you?

GEORGE: Fine as silk, thanks.

LIZ: You certainly look it. (pg. 50; act 1)

When going to get him to introduce him to Liz and Mike, Tracy comments, "I'll bring him right in and put him on view - a one-man exhibition" (pg. 49; act 1). Upon his appearance she comments, "Isn't he beautiful? Isn't it wonderful what a little soap and water will do?" (pg. 50; act 1). For his part, George is keen on his past being prominent and is carefully humble. He notes the "coal dust" that he has shed and deflects praise with the statement that he was mostly lucky. George's looks are again referenced in a conversation between Mike and Liz,

MIKE: George is interesting. Get him on coal some time.

LIZ: I'd rather have him on toast. (pg. 67; act 2.1)

This is not without purpose, as George will prove to be more of a picture of something, than anything of actual content. Despite his setup to be the ideal American, George is not, and will not prove to be the hero of the piece. The lesson to be remembered is to know your place.

There is nothing horribly wrong with George, but the audience is aware that he is subordinate to Mike and Dexter because of the opinions of the play's characters. We know he is not great because they tell us that. Tracy’s younger sister Dinah is quite clear in her preference for Dexter and is more obvious in the opinion that there is nothing to George but his story. We learn Uncle Willie's feelings on George at the prodding of Dinah, "Kittredge? I deplore him" (pg. 152; act 3). While the Lord family is perfectly civil to George, he has not endeared himself in
the slightest. Again, he is good in theory, but not much in reality. Even Mike, who philosophically likes the idea of George, decides that the reality of him is not so great. While an easy argument can be made that there is a conflict of interest as they are both attracted to the same woman, Mike does not argue that he is the better match for Tracy, but that Dexter is the better man, “Well, you see, I've made a funny discovery: that in spite of the fact that someone's up from the bottom, he may be quite a heel. And that even though someone else is born to the purple, be still may be quite a guy" (pg. 173; act 3).

We largely experience George and Dexter through Mike and Liz. Mike knows of George’s story through an article in the liberal Magazine The Nation and George’s involvement in labor issues. They are predisposed to like George and to dislike Dexter and the Lords. Mike even asks of Liz, "what right has a girl like Tracy Lord to exist?" (pg. 67; act 2.1), the idea being that the wealthy are useless. What do they contribute to society? He clearly thinks that the middle class are of prime importance and this is how he approaches his dealings with the wedding party. How Mike’s ideas are torn down is what reaffirms the status quo of the primacy of the upper class and the cardboard nature of a model like George Kittredge.

The worst thing we see George do is jump to conclusions about his fiancée who is acting out of character for everything that he knows about her. His real flaw is that he actually aspires to raise his class level. When Dexter and George see Mike carrying Tracy early in the morning, they have decidedly different reactions. Dexter is sympathetic, but George is angry and judgmental. Having just gone skinny-dipping, Mike and Tracy are only wearing robes and slippers. George assumes the worst. Dexter tries to calm George and reminds him that, "we're all only human," but George does not take comfort in that and replies that, "you - all of you - with

342 Although the play does not go into specifics, it is mentioned that George was involved with the Guffey Coal Act which dealt with labor laws. James D. Watkinson, "An Exercise in Futility: The Guffey Coal Act of 1935," Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies 54.2 (1987): 103-14.
your damned sophisticated ideas!" (pg. 144; act 2.2). George's annoyance and unhappiness in the upper class is becoming more apparent. While he is no fan of George either, Sandy gives the point that George has every reason to be annoyed with his fiancée’s behavior leading up to the early morning swim. Sandy is referencing Tracy’s actions at the party the night before when he comments of George that "he had a right to be sore. You and Mike disappeared for two hours, at least" (pg. 112; act 2.2). Even disregarding jealousy or concerns about Tracy spending time with another man and the opinions of others on that topic, it is rude and inconsiderate to leave your fiancé alone at a party that is filled with your family. It does not seem out of the ordinary for him to expect the woman he is going to marry the next day to spend the evening in his company.

Upon seeing Mike and Tracy in their compromising position, Dexter acts rather nobly when he punches Mike before George, a large and now angry man has the chance. This action places Dexter in a positive light and it also presents the opportunity for yet another character to state their feelings on George. Mac, the working class night watchman, sees Dexter standing over Mike who has been knocked to the floor by Dexter:

MAC: Who is it? [sees Mike's face] Hell! - I thought it might be Kittredge.

DEXTER: We can't have everything, Mac. (pg. 146; act 2.2)

Ultimately, George requests an explanation from Tracy about the events of the night before. While he does this in the awkward and impersonal form of a letter, it is not an unreasonable request. In addition to that, Tracy is relieved but offended to learn that she did not sleep with Mike, that he merely carried her to bed and then left. Naturally, this reaction also upsets George.

There is an interesting exchange when Tracy, George, Mike, and Dexter are all arguing over last night's events and the wedding that is supposed to occur in moments. Tracy is angry
that George did not have more faith in her despite appearances. He decides that alcohol was to blame and asks her not to drink again:

GEORGE: But if it hadn't been for the drink last night, all this might not have happened.

TRACY: But apparently nothing did. What made you think it had?

GEORGE: It didn't take much imagination, I can tell you that.

TRACY: Not much, perhaps-but just of a certain kind.

GEORGE: It seems you didn't think any too well of yourself.

TRACY: That's the odd thing, George: somehow I'd have hoped you'd think better of me than I did.

GEORGE: I'm not going to quibble, Tracy: all the evidence was there.

TRACY: And I was guilty straight off-that is, until I was proved innocent.

GEORGE: Well?

DEXTER: Down right un-American, if you ask me. (pgs. 194-195; act 3)

Both Tracy and Dinah thought that she had slept with Mike, but George is the only one that is called un-American. While the line was intended to elicit laughs, it also adds to the idea that Americans should not want to be Kittredge. They cannot turn themselves into the old money and wit that is Dexter, but perhaps there is another model, one that is less eager to rise to the top tier of the financial and social class, someone that wants to work hard and have a good life, but also appreciates and does not threaten the upper class. Mike is not yet this character, but one can see the potential. Since arriving at the Lord's home, he has gone from hating the upper class, to appreciating that maybe he jumped to conclusions, to being Dexter’s best man.
The most negative thing George does is decide to overlook their current argument and go on with the wedding when he learns that an important publisher is in the audience and that the wedding will almost assuredly be big news. This just highlights the fact that he wants attention, and old money wants no such thing. Upon George's clear excitement at this development, Tracy immediately calls off the marriage. Why, George is just about appearances. He is all facade and no substance. While in the terms of the play, this is used to quickly dismiss one suitor for another, deeper class meanings can be derived from this and it boils down to the ideal American not overreaching and being content to succeed within the middle class. Just ignore the few people at the top of the pyramid that control everything. Be content with your car and two-bedroom house. After all, you could be toiling away in a field or a factory with little to eat and nothing to drive. Be happy with all the consumer products you can strive to attain.

It has been made apparent that George and Tracy are not well suited, and George is not wrong when he voices his suspicion that truewit Dexter is largely to blame, "I've got a feeling you've had more to do with this than anyone" (pg. 197; act 3). In *Way of the World* and other examined plays, the heroine is saved from marrying an ill-suited match, in the genre this is frequently done through the actions of the male hero and traditionally the truewit. However, the man that the female is generally saved from is a complete louse or fool. True, George was enamored of Tracy's social position and the attention it would garner him, but he did not set forth to woo and marry her. It was Tracy who first showed interest in George. If anything, she was using him as much as he was using her, and he did not mean her any ill will. Tracy is saved from him because they are an incompatible class match.

Despite his condemnation of the elite class once he has been disengaged, George has made an active effort to rise from the lower class to the upper class. What damns him in the eyes
of his fiancée is that he is pleased that their wedding will be covered by the press. He is happy that he is marrying into an important family and what it means for his social standing and power level. In other words, he is punished for reaching for, and partially attaining the American dream. He is the embodiment of what has been preached as the ideal American identity, but he is ultimately punished for it. His character is no worse than the other vying male leads. Mike is judgmental and seems oblivious of the pain he causes his female coworker with whom he is romantically linked. Dexter, who does get the girl, is likely an alcoholic who possibly assaulted Tracy during their marriage. The worst that can be said of George is that he is eager to climb the social ladder, something that was known before he and Tracy even began to date. He does not appear to be taking advantage of Tracy either. He appeals to her precisely because of his self-made rise, and she appeals to him because of the image that she has presented.

Upon being dismissed, George finally loses his cool, "you and your whole rotten class" (pg. 197; act 3). This comment is directed at Dexter, but implicates Tracy as well. He goes on saying, "listen: you're all on your way out-the lot of you-and don't think you aren't.-Yes, and good riddance!" and so he leaves and no one seems to care all that much (pgs. 197-198; act 3). His parting lines make him come off like a petulant, sore loser, to both the other characters and the audience as well, but is there really anything so wrong with what he has said? He too has been used and quickly tossed aside by the ruling class that he was engaged to. Their treatment of him, and the quick absence of him from their lives and minds only supports the idea that one cannot ever truly rise to the highest class and the ones that attempt such a climb can easily be cast off and forgotten as though they meant nothing. This concept is further strengthened by Tracy still getting married, just to someone else. It took no time at all for George not to matter.
It is not just the play that marks George as being a social climber in the wrong. Contemporary reviews of the original Broadway production also present him in a similar manner. Reading the most cursory newspaper notes to in-depth reviews, will describe him as a "cad" and a "heel" when the only thing he has done is pursue the American dream. This says a great deal about the construction of the American identity not just in theatre, but also in society as a whole. The preferred identity is still that of a white, wealthy, independent man, but the caveat is that upward mobility has its limits and that the class system is alive and well in American society. There is a reason why there are terms like upper middle class and lower middle class. The same sorts of conditions are not commonly attached to the lower or upper class. There is class mobility within the middle class that limits movement up into the upper class. This does not entirely torpedo the concept of the American dream, but rather than rising into the 1% the progression limits itself to growing the middle class or at least the belief that one is a member of the middle class.

The middle class members of the party, Liz and Mike, also quickly dismiss George. Mike, in his bid to be noble, offers to marry Tracy, an attempt to rescue her (not to rise in class), but his offer is quickly rejected. As is the standard of the genre, the wedding does go on, with Dexter of course, as the class appropriate groom. Dexter saves the day, despite Tracy wanting to get herself out of trouble instead of someone else doing it. A Cyrano de Bergerac scene plays out with Tracy explaining the situation to the wedding guests while Dexter feeds her lines, lines that include her remarrying him. The play remains true to genre form and very true to the concept of the White rich man controlling all things, even the empowered female at the center of the play.

Dexter wins the girl and is the clear wit of the piece, but Mike is also given approval through the actions of Dexter, "I'd like you to be my best man, if you will, because I think you're one hell of a guy, Mike" (pg. 203; act 3). For his part, Mike who was initially soured on the upper class has made a complete 180 and states, "I'd be honored" (pg. 203; act 3). Mike is an intriguing figure because while we know that conventions assure that Tracy will end up with Dexter, there are a few moments when it seems like Mike might be her choice. The fact that he is even in the running enhances his worth. Mike is from Indiana and Liz from Iowa, so they are from Middle America, and good middle class average stock. Despite his front of being something of a liberal and thinking himself above the old family that he is reporting on, Mike is practically scandalized when he finds out through Tracy's prodding that Liz has been divorced. He is not from an old family, but he proves to be more old fashioned than the old money. Both Liz and Mike are rather old fashioned in their views on marriage. Tracy makes them squirm and a bit offended when she asks if they are living together (they aren't married).

When asked by Tracy about his youth, Mike implies that he was not from an affluent family and that has been the cause of some of the limitations in his life. In response, Tracy makes a comment that is a reference to George, but can be seen as a broader statement to the whole of the population noting that being from a lower class background does not have to be a bad thing, "not if you're the right kind of man" (pg. 45; act 1). That's right poor and underprivileged, it is up to you to make something of your lives. You have no one to blame but yourselves. It is not the 1% who are keeping you down, you are your own limitation. In America, everybody can be somebody if you work hard enough and want it enough. This is the message that has been sent to the population and formed by the ruling class since before the America was even a country. This idea is still strong in the nation today. The rich deserve to be rich, and you too could be wealthy
if you were worthy. You are not trying hard enough. A few of the lower class, like George, might make their way up in social standing, but the number is negligible. That is the ideal of the people forming the ideal identity, enough success stories to make the dream plausible, but not enough to endanger the security of those that are already ensconced in power and have no desire to have company. Within this ideal also lies the importance of the middle class. The middle class will increase in numbers after World War Two, but here we can clearly see the importance placed on this growing sector of the country; aspire for more, just not too much.

Mike explains to Tracy that in the real world, people cannot just do whatever they want, but have to be concerned with issues of money and tells her that, "you'll never believe it, but there are people in this world who have to earn their living" (pg. 73; act 2.1). In Mike we see a character that still holds true to the idea that a real American does not want handouts. While she means well, Tracy insults Mike by offering to let him use one of her spare houses so that he has time to write and does not have to spend all of his time working to earn his way. He informs her that, "the idea of artists having a patron has more or less gone out" (pg. 76; act 2.1). Tracy is offended that her offer is so quickly rebuffed and that it makes her feel "useless" (pg. 76; act 2.1). This paints the upper class in a losing, or depending on the vantage point, winning situation in that when they offer to help they offend, but are also disliked for keeping their assets. Mike’s distaste at her offer is in keeping with the American characteristic of finding the appearance of servitude or in some way being dependent, offensive.

While Mike makes constant digs at the family and challenges their worth to the country, other characters constantly pipe up with examples of how the common man is not that great either. For example, when Mike is going on about the pomposity of the name C.K. Dexter Haven, Liz notes, "I knew a plain Joe Smith once. He was only a clerk in a hardware store, but
he was an absolute louse" (pg. 39; act 1). The play spends a lot of energy exonerating the upper class for The Depression. Sure, they may have made it through relatively unscathed, but that does not make them bad people. Mike uses class against Dexter and the Lords. Having not yet met Dexter, he judges him by his name and because he "plays polo" and "designs and races sailboats" (pg. 39; act 1). At the same time, having not yet met George either, he opines, "poor fellow, I wonder how he fell for it" (pg. 39; act 1).

Mike is a sort of American type in the making. He is from Middle America and has to toil at a job he does not particularly like to pay his bills. While he is not a laborer like George, Mike represents the changing demographics of America with the rise of the white collar middle class worker. He is a bit like a fish out of water with the Lords, a definite outsider like the country bumpkin, but he quickly learns to adapt to his surroundings like Brander. He also shares some characteristics with the truewit and is smart, quick witted, and funny. He is not really a legitimate country bumpkin or truewit, but he makes an interesting study of a character type being formed between the two. He is not the fool, but he does not win the day and get the girl, but he is on his way.

During the same year that *The Philadelphia Story* was produced (1939), the Second World War erupted in Europe. While the play and subsequent movie are still popular, Pearl Harbor is attacked and the United States is drawn into another war on a global scale. Over the years, the nation had become increasingly involved with world affairs, no longer a country merely concerned with maintaining its own independence, America sought to expand its influence beyond its own borders. In short, the world changes and The United States becomes a world power. The period of *The Philadelphia Story* gives us a picture of the character development right up to the moment when America becomes a dominant world force.
[figs. 9 and 10] Figure 9 (on the left) shows a dark colored German soldier, while figure 10 (on the right) depicts a German soldier as a gorilla. These are just two of many propaganda posters used in the war to encourage men to enlist and for people in invest in the war effort. 344

344 Figure 9: Frederick Strothmann (artist), Beat Back the Hun with Liberty Bonds, 1918, poster, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/94505100/>.
Figure 10: Harry Hopps (artist), Destroy This Mad Brute Enlist – U.S. Army, ca. 1917, poster, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010652057/>
[fig. 11] The above graph displays the steady rise of the percent of wealth held by people within the top percent of net worth with the 1% controlling nearly 50% of the wealth at the peak.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation is an analysis of the country bumpkin character type. The truewit was the primary character in English manners plays, but in America the bumpkin develops in a way that makes it not only the more popular type, but also an expression of American identity. The American character emergent from the bumpkin type is as popular as ever in American culture and politics. One only has to look at the 2016 American presidential election to see the enduring concept of the ruling class masquerading as the common man. During its development in America, the country bumpkin type transforms into a constructed and idealized American identity that champions the concepts of freedom and the everyman, but in reality is a member of the privileged class.

For this transformation to take place manners plays and their character types traveled from England to Colonial America and the dramatic traditions took root. We see the same repeating character types, but they are affected by their new environment. The truewit was the popular center of English manners plays, but increasingly, the country bumpkin type resonated in America. Variations of the Jonathan character, who is essentially a bumpkin, proliferate throughout American entertainment.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the official ties to England have been cut, but the cultural ties still remain. Even with the strong cultural sway that England holds over the new country, American playwrights are beginning to pen their own manners plays and plays in general. Moving into the nineteenth century, English plays are still in abundance on the American stages, but more and more American works are being created and performed. During
this time period, the country bumpkin and truewit types are shaped in a way that alters them from their English form to more in the style of the still being constructed identity of the United States.

The cultural ties to England are not easily severed, particularly in theatre, and despite the clamor for more uniquely American voices, native playwrights are often viewed as being less prestigious than foreign authors. With the War of 1812, America makes another attempt to further separate itself from Great Britain and establish itself as an independent and sovereign country on an international scale. During the course of the war, Andrew Jackson comes to prominence, the country’s problematic relationship with American Indians increases, and in a combination of those two elements the United States increases in territory as Jackson gains control over a large swath of American Indian land. With Jackson there is also a steady rise in anti-intellectualism and the continued embrace of the concept of common sense. This mirrors itself in the popularity of the country bumpkin type in comparison to the truewit type.

The long existing cultural and economic rift between the northern and southern portions of the country escalates at mid-century and inevitably erupts in civil war. During this time America’s racial problem and class inequality are on full display both politically and theatrically. The ravages of war do not stop theatre and melodrama and variety acts prove to be popular. The rail lines that were expanded on for the war allow theatre to reach a wider expanse of the population.

The coming of the new century brings more focus and interest on the ever mounting social issues in America. The Progressive Era brings a push for reforms and on the stage manners plays become more prominent after a bit of a dearth during the war years. Given that the genre focuses on contemporary society, the style is particularly well suited to address the issues of the day.
As America moves into the middle of the twentieth century, notably the Second World War and beyond, the country takes on a different standing in the world and at the end of the thirties it is on the precipice of major change. No longer will America be the far off country that strives, and fails for autonomy and isolation. The forties and fifties will be an era where the country gains obvious political, economic, and military clout in the world, but just as significantly, maybe even more significantly, American culture comes into prominence and spreads across the globe. The need to import European ideas lessens and the American character type and the American identity are recognizable at home and abroad. The American type will continue to change and develop as society churns on, but this point is important as it marks a definitive change in the identity of the nation. With the gains of international power and influence, the character types and identity change as well.

Looking outside the scope of this dissertation and at the implications discovered there is a plethora of information to still be explored. War continues to be a significant shaper of the nation with the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq all leaving an impression. How does identity change as the very concept of warfare changes? What affects did the decades long Cold War have on the concepts of identity? What affects is the war on terrorism having right now?

While war remains a powerful marker on American culture, it is not the only factor. Technology was touched upon in this work, how the transcontinental railway opened the country and the emergence of radio and film, but moving forward after the Second World War, what are the implications of the digital revolution? The American industrial revolution reshaped the country and forever altered society. Did the rapid and tremendous growth in technology also create similarly immense changes? Almost assuredly, the rise of the internet and social media must be making a considerable impression. Connected to that, after the United States’
development into a world power, it is operating in a more global society, and in truth has always operated in a global society, but the country is now more actively aware of the rest of the world. What affect does this mass of information have?

The types and the constructed identity focused upon in this work were White males because of the power structures that formed those types and identities. In the span of this study’s timeline, a slow change in the agency of women can be seen. To a lesser extent, a sliver of forward movement can be detected in characters of color, but where this study leaves off, there is much more to be done. A worthy expansion of this piece would go into the civil rights and second-wave feminism movements and analyze what role they play in shaping American identity and in turn how that is presented in the character types.

As it was before, so shall it be again, is an apt phrase when discussing the American economy. Looking through years of economic history, the reckless speculation and inevitable crashes followed by the economy’s reemergence, happens again and again. What affect did the great recession and the housing bubble burst have on America’s constructed identity? What role will the student loan crisis play in shaping that identity and how is it reflected in the character types? This study used the frame of manners plays because of the genre’s contemporaneity and its focus on society, but these character types and identity issues exist outside of these parameters. The country bumpkin, truewit, and the molded American character somewhere in between the two, can regularly be seen in television, film, and even political personas.


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