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Passion, Purity and Patriotism:  
Melodrama and the Evangelical Divide

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Drama and Theatre

by

Katie Neff Stone

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Anthony Kubiak, Chair  
Professor Stephen Barker  
Professor Ketu Katrak  
Professor John Rouse  
Professor Annette Schlichter

2015



## DEDICATION

For Elliott Scout

“I knew, always, that I would be a worker in the vineyard,  
as are all men and women living at the same time,  
whether they are aware of it or not.”  
—Czeslaw Milosz, “Late Ripeness”

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Passion, Purity and Patriotism:  
Melodrama and the Evangelical Divide

By

Katie Neff Stone

Doctor of Drama and Theatre

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Anthony Kubiak, Chair

*Passion, Purity and Patriotism: Melodrama and the Evangelical Divide* is invested in the regulation of purity norms within the United States of America during the period immediately following the Civil War, looking at the development of time and emotion along gendered lines within melodramatic performances. Rather than relegating these constructions of time and emotion to the historical past, this work traces the history of temporal and emotional regulation into a reading of the contemporary Evangelical church, which relies on the same melodramatic tropes to control and construct gender performances. Historical inquiry, textual analysis of late 19th century melodramas, critical analysis of three distinct moments in the life of a woman—girlhood, marriage and childbirth—, and cultural analysis of the purity ball and Quiverfull movements highlight the various manifestations of purity culture throughout United States' past and present, creating an idealized version of the woman, formulated through sentiment and futurity. This dissertation looks specifically at Dion Boucicault's *Rip Van Winkle*, *The Poor of New York*, and *The Octoroon*, as well as James Herne's *Margaret Fleming*, Augustine Daly's



*Divorce*, and the Broadway musical *The Black Crook*. My argument is that these forms of melodrama are the direct ancestors of Evangelical church culture in the contemporary United States, and that the vigilance over maintaining both national and personal purity through emotion and time is a project that creates not only the idealized woman as a daughter, wife and mother, but also an idealized American citizen who conforms to the societal and legislative definitions of purity.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Borders and Bodies, a Few Terms Defined**

In the United States of America, borders play an inestimable psychic role in the structuring and the development of a national identity. There are obvious borders, like the walls and fences that separate the United States from Mexico, the border crossings between Canada and the United States, and the states' borders, easily and thoughtlessly traversed, sometimes even daily, by large portions of the United States population. There are other borders, too, breaking down the geographical landscape of the United States even further: national parks, farmland, city limits, urban zoning, backyards, and, perhaps the most significant border of all: the limits of oneself, as a bounded and finite being, contained within the body, but, like all borders, permeable and porous. This work deals with the question of purity within the United States: the larger insistence on national border-making as a process of creating a pure patriotic identity; but also, the way in which the anxiety of purity has filtered into the personal level of delineating the self from the other.

I hope to accomplish two goals in this introduction: to present some key definitions of terms that will be used throughout this work— including the term “Evangelical”— and to begin laying the groundwork for what an investigation of the dual borders of the nation and the self entails. In order to accomplish this, the introduction stands in two parts: first, an investigation of the question of nationality as it relates to the creation of borders within the mid-to-late 19th century, specifically addressing the Homestead Act of 1862 and Josiah Strong's manifesto *Our Country*; and secondly, a definition of how the term “Evangelical” will be used in this work, specifically concerning the idea of purity. These two investigations hold a number of ideas in

common, and looking at them in tangent will set a launchpad for the investigation of United States identity as it relates to the creation and maintaining of personal and public borders. In terms of the scope of the larger project, I question the ways in which this anxiety about inclusion and exclusion—the creation of borders— within United States culture causes an insistence on individual purity as an ultimate social value. This desire is primarily carried through affective means, with emotional adherence to imagined communities providing the regulation inherent in the formation of patriotic and moralistic groupings.

Because of the emphasis on the emotional as a key indicator of participation in the dual projects of nation-building and personal purity, I am led back to the 19th century, where melodramatic forms of entertainment were creating a national zeitgeist of saturated language and gendered modes of understanding. My argument is that these forms of melodrama, exhibited both onstage and in the pulpit during the revivals of the 19th century, are the direct ancestors of Evangelical church culture in the contemporary United States, and that the vigilance over maintaining both national and personal purity through emotion is a project that has been a facet of the United States from the end of the Civil War. This formation of emotion, exhibited as passion and sentiment, as a means of producing hyper-vigilance over the project of United States inclusion is not an isolated historical event, and melodrama is not an art form that has faded into the recesses of history. Rather, melodrama in the United States has functioned to fashion our understanding and use of emotion, and has provided those who use the melodramatic constructs well— namely, the modern Evangelical church— with the possibility of recreating the dual project of national and personal purity as a signifier of one's identification within the American project.

## **Methods**

In this work, I am making use of several methods and methodologies, as I feel that the subject matter I am addressing refuses to yield to mere textual or historical analysis. While either of these carries a great deal of value in and of itself, I hope to produce a work that does not merely relay information, be it historical or textual, but which also collates around interpretation of texts and their larger meaning. In this regard, no single method seems appropriate for the hybrid, multi-disciplinary work I hope to undertake. I feel myself compelled towards this approach through the work of feminist scholars and thinkers, such as Hélène Cixous in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” and Tracy Davis in her work on performative time, both of whom describe the task of the feminist scholar as existing outside of the normative modes of linear progressions, single disciplines, and prohibitively restrictive methodological confines. I am certainly indebted to their example, and the many feminist scholars who have followed their calls to action.

Additionally, many authors have provided historical case studies already, replete with vast citation and primary source research: many of these volumes have been invaluable to me throughout my own research. However, I am not trained as a theatre historian, and I cannot, and do not, make claims that I am providing in-depth historical readings of the plays and performative examples I am using: this is not a work of theatre history. Rather, I lean a great deal more on my training as a Performance Studies scholar, who has been trained in critical theory and whose thesis lies in reassessing the past in terms of how we perceive and evaluate the world today. I do not mean to do history a disservice by angling my work directly towards its utility, but I do feel that history is often relegated to the annals of the past, wherein only historians may mediate access, even for scholars whose work remains tangentially rooted in modes of historical inquiry. In

this regard, I hope to enliven history with various modes of critical discourse, exhibiting the long-duration of the 19th century as its stretch lengthens into the American performance of self in the present moment.

In this regard, I am, instead of illuminating the works purely through an historical viewpoint, looking to provide textual and critical analysis of the plays and performative works I am using throughout the text. Historical details will be provided as contextual information, but most of these are drawn from secondary sources. Through my use of textual analysis of 19th century performances and play scripts, I hope to push my work into the realm of critical inquiry, wherein the texts themselves comment on the overall thesis of the work, rather than composing the bulk of the investigation in and of themselves. Close readings of the text, or the historical, performative events, allow for and enliven a wider engagement with critical thinkers throughout the work. In this regard, throughout the project, I move between the textual analysis of the historical performances, and the manifestations of similar impulses within modern religious practice. I realize and acknowledge that this approach does not adhere to the methodological restrictions of theatre historians, but I hope to accomplish something different: a critical inquiry into the possibility of time as a non-linear construct, wherein returns, gaps, and revisions construct images of the self which are always-already refracted across both time and modes of discourse.

I look specifically at the United States of America in this work, and seek to limit my performative, historical examples to the Northern portion of the United States during the later portion of the 19th century. When I address the modern manifestations of my inquiry, examples are pulled from a wider national project, in order to demonstrate the wide reach of the 19th century's cultural and religious performances. I would also like to note that while I argue that the forma-

tions of time and emotion are central to the development of the United States as a country, I am saying that these impulses are *also* in the United States, not *only* in the United States. For instance, the willful misremembering of history is not a purely American construction; it influences policy and culture from countries around the globe. However, because such a project could fill volumes, I am looking specifically at the United States and the particular manifestations which collate around the 19th century emotional structures and the Evangelical church.

It is also necessary to make a note concerning my use of language within this text: throughout the readings, gender is presented as a strict binary, and the language I use concerning gender often reflects that binary. Because this work is seeking to read into the constructions of gender and purity within dominant culture, the assumption of a dichotomous understanding of gender is not challenged within this text, simply due to the nature of the cultures and performances under investigation. The challenging of the porous identity structures of gender and gender relationships is certainly a component of this work, but the primary use of the terms “male” and “female” align themselves with the dominant understanding of gender. Likewise, the use of the term “American” is a term that is multivalent and complex in its usage, with widespread and distinct interpretations, but within the study of these particular moments in American history, aligned with a dominant understanding. In using the term “American” in this way, I hope to present an investigation of the dominant culture’s relationship to this word, but it would be neglectful of me to assume a singular or even commonly-used understanding of these terms from the outset. Because of the nature of this project, I recognize that I am limiting my use of the words relating to gender and patriotic identity to a distinct usage: one that forecloses the possibil-

ity of other meanings, in the service of better understanding the dominant use of these terms in relation to the texts being studied here.

In order to compliment my peripheral approach to the relationship of history to performance text, I have developed a structure that I hope better serves both my larger argument and the works with which I am engaging. Rather than a linear, chronological reading, I am basing the structure of my argument around three phases in the life of a woman: girlhood, marriage and childbirth, loosely relating each of these moments to each of my three chapters, respectively. While I am not arguing that these phases are necessarily undertaken as a facet of every woman's lived experience, I am using these events as critical jumping-points, where the ideal is presented and glorified, and then most often disrupted and subverted through the performative examples. In this way, I hope that basing my investigation around the body and the lived experience of the woman, rather than a purely historical chronology, will align my work within the critical viewpoints presented by feminist inquiry.

In terms of how this plays out within the work itself, the following section provides a reading of how a cultural moment of the 19th century—the passing of the Homestead Act and the publication of Josiah Strong's *Our Country*—has transitioned into a contemporary example that both appropriates and approximates the development of these ideas within the 19th century. Through the linguistic uses of “homestead” and “homeland,” the United State's insistence on national borders, both through expansion and imperial aims, becomes a starting point for the discussion of purity, which presents itself as a micro-personal manifestation of the same impulses. In the following section, I lay a foundation that addresses the 19th century understanding of the

nation, in order to transition, in the rest of this work, into a smaller scale investigation of the same issues, specifically, the concepts of personal purity and the performance of emotion.

### **A Bordered Landscape**

Just slightly over a year after the American Civil War began, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into existence, providing land to any citizen who had not taken up arms against the United States of America. The land needed to be resided on for five years, and it had to have substantial improvements during that time, including the building of a shelter and the planting of crops. At the end of that five year period and the filing of a land deed, up to 160 acres of land were given to the United States citizen. From the time of the thirteen colonies and the American Revolution, land was sold in sections of 640 acres, for \$1 per acre, until 1800, when lots were divided into 320 acres, with prices fixed at \$1.25 per acre. In 1854, land was graduated based on desirability, with prices lowed to nearly 12.5 cents for less desirable land (“Homestead”). Much of this land was still unobtainable to the average homesteader, until the Homestead Act removed the financial burden of land ownership, and replaced the monetary burden with a burden to develop and plant the land within a designated period of time. Homesteading existed in various parts of the continental United States, in various manifestations, until 1972 and in Alaska until 1986.

While homesteading was a hugely significant act, which had direct effect on numerous lives both in the late 19th century and throughout United States history, it was, and is, a powerful reminder of the process of becoming-American, and the perpetual need to designate borders in order to institute and control the “homestead” of American soil. Looking at the Homestead Act of 1862 in connection with Josiah Strong’s 1885 work, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its*



*Present Crisis*, a complex argument arises for the necessity for Westward expansion and the purity of the American identity, ignoring and erasing the bodies of the constructed “other.” These manifestations of the American zeitgeist for expansion, in concert, illustrate the ways in which the United States developed its identity and the identity of its citizens around the idea of bordered landscapes, signified by the discursive use of the term “homestead,” and later, “homeland,” and physicalized through occupation and signs of improvement, such as fields and fences.

Definitionally speaking, one of the primary questions of the Homestead Act became the question of citizenship: who was a citizen of the United States, and therefore a viable body for inclusion in the Homestead project? The designated land areas in what is now Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana were set aside only for citizens of the United States, specifically those aged 21 and older who had not fought against the Union; men and women were both included. However, the question of citizenship is a question that is not answered purely through the legislative taxonomies that subdivide human beings into various categories of (dis)enfranchisement. Rather, the question of citizenship is also an affective question, falling under the auspices of societal control, as Josiah Strong makes abundantly clear throughout his work. The definition of citizenship is entirely malleable, particularly within the United States, where a lack of linear or long-duration historical time perpetually recreates the necessity for the societal maintenance of control mechanisms whereby certain bodies are either imagined as citizens or as the invading other against whom one must constantly be on guard. Between the creation of the Homestead Act and the works that responded to it, including *Our Country*, the question of citizenship became intricately tied to the idea of borders, wherein a citizen was one who demonstrated, visually and affectively, an identity that was acceptable to the United States within the delineated spaces it

was seeking to produce. The citizen of the United States was the one who could mirror the anxiety of infiltration and infection, establishing a pure and bounded identity that would further the ability to delineate self from other, both on a national scale and on a personal one.

According to Strong's work, the United States of America, during the late 19th century, was in deadly peril, at the cost of its very soul. The work is full of saturated, hyper-militaristic language, which pushes towards a hyper-aggressive and isolated culture that prioritizes separation from a world of constant moral and ethical attrition, where the present moment constantly stands as a particular moment of crisis. Austin Phelps writes in his glowing introduction to Strong's work, "The truth that Christian enterprise for the moral conquest of this land needs to be conducted with the self-abandonment which determined men would throw into the critical moment in the critical battle of the critical campaign for the nation's endangered life," (V) repeating the theme of ultimate crisis facing the country. Strong, in his chapters, walks through an outline of the vast material wealth of the United States, and then situates this abundance in terms of how it is threatened by various persons who would despoil and destroy the nearly limitless potential he sees.

In his book, *Empire's Workshop*, Greg Grandin speaks about the kind of imperialism that interested the United States in the late 19th century, a moment in time when the country was questioning its role in the imperialist world. He cites Josiah Strong's *Our Country*, pointing towards the difference between "expansionism" and the "direct imperialism" of nations such as Great Britain, France, and Spain. The United States, early in the 19th century, when areas like the Philippines could have been under their direct control, chose to focus on expanding and concretizing the borders of the nation itself, rather than reaching across oceans to assert direct legislative

control (24). Grandin reasons that this is likely because the ascending United States feared the influx of cheap labor, which would endanger its own labor market, a fact that Strong agrees with in his cited “threats” against the project of land development. In this way, the anxieties of an imperialist United States were unique in the first world: the threats to labor and to internal development were not a location separated by seas and miles, as was true of other imperialist countries at this time; rather, it was the land itself, and the populations who were arriving to its shores. The land to be conquered and tamed was the land of the United States itself, or, the land which would soon become the United States.

Because of this, the land could not conceptually be inhabited by its prior occupants, because it is no longer the inhabitants who must be colonized; it is the land itself. Rather than institute a ruling government over foreign populations, using their labor forces to extract use-value from the land, the United States, favoring expansion over direct imperialism, opted to simply remove the existing population, starting the country from a moment of erasure. In Strong’s discussion of the availability and development of the Western territories, he makes only rare mention of the Native Americans; their erasure is total within the mindset of the American public, so much so that the land carried only rare memory of their existence within Strong’s popular writing. They are not listed among the threats to the growing United States, and their absence points towards the lack of historical regard: the American soil is, and always has been, according to the 19th century author, American, needing only to be claimed and developed by the citizen.

In his book, *Black is a Country*, Nikhil Pal Singh writes, “... the idea of an American race underscores a dogmatic vision of national unity-- one whose power has arguably increased after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001-- that expressly precludes the more complicated histo-

ries of racialized national identity” (10). I would argue that this is not an “increasing” trend, but rather one that has lain in various levels of latency throughout America’s history, exhibiting itself clearly in the late 19th century, as well as during the post 9/11 era. Later, Singh writes:

Even though whiteness and Americanness were never perfect synonyms, during the imperial scramble for territories they increasingly operated in concert as signs of universality, humanity, and civilization as the nation entered the globalizing epoch. The power of whiteness was enhanced by its mutability in a context of national and global expansion... (32)

In terms of the late 19th century, we see this moment of white mutability being developed and produced within the imagination of the United States, clearly evident in Strong’s writing and other expansionist works. This whiteness, which eventually develops into an absencing and rejecting of other bodies, is still being worked through, as we see in Strong’s “threats,” but one already sees the lack of attention to historical details and the glossing over temporal understanding in favor of promoting the white, expansionist project. One sees this clearly in the very subtitle of Strong’s work: *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Present Crisis*. There is no past in Strong’s work; there is only the optimism of an American on-the-make and the critical moment of the present, where “Every day has been a day of crisis. Every hour has been an hour of splendid destiny. Every minute has been ‘the nick of time’” (iv). Presenting the present moment as a crisis provides the white reader of Strong’s work to feel his or her own place in the American project of expansion: if the crisis is now, then action must be taken. What Strong does not address, however, is how the United States arrived at this crisis: it is simply a condition of the present, something that, like ownership of the land, has always been, and, presumably, will always be. It is

embedded in a static temporality, one that forecloses the complexity of the past for a focus on the potential of the future and the crisis of the present. This absencing of both bodies and historical time presents an America that is, affectively, a vast void: empty of bodies, history, and, at the moment, the full expression of its complete potential. This demonstrates what Anne McClintock calls “the myth of the empty land” (30).

Strong, in his work, lays out the material wealth of the United States in geographical and numerical terms. The number of acres becomes a sort of incantation, and the use of the land undergoes a mathematics from arable acres to crop yield, given sets of circumstances that Strong passes quickly over: the proclivities of desert land to remain dry or the relative inability to transfer crops from the homestead to the markets. For instance, he writes:

Land often appears worthless which experiment proves to be fertile... Barren lands are often rendered fruitful. Water is all that is needed to make most of our western “deserts” blossom as the rose. ... Many of these wells have been sunk in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado. Moreover, the rainfall seems to be increasing with the cultivation of the soil. It is also worthy of note that what rain there is usually falls in those months when it is most needed, and that there is little or none during harvest. (22)

This blatant optimism, which promises settlers who would be completely removing themselves from their current lives and moving, via train or wagon, to the Western territories, that “rainfall is increasing with the cultivation of the soil,” seems painful at best, given the long history of failed homesteads and testimonies of difficult lives spent willing crops to grow. These difficulties are passed over in favor of promoting the use-value of the land itself, calling on the reader to take up

his or her charge and inhabit the space between the glowing possibility of the land and the hardships of production. This space was crucial to the Homestead Act, which required citizens to make significant improvements on the land they inhabited, demonstrating evidence of these improvements at the end of five years.

One homestead claim document shows the ways that these improvements were measured. The form, filled out by two “registers” who knew a homesteader named Daniel Freeman, state that they know him to have a wife and two children, that he is a citizen of the United States, and that he “entered and made settlement on said land,” and “has built a house thereon,” giving the dimensions, number of doors and windows, and the fact that it “is a comfortable house to live in.” Freeman also, according to the document, “ploughed [sic], fenced, and cultivated 35 acres of land,” as well as, “built a stable, a sheep shed 100 feet long, a corn crib and has 40 apple and about 400 peach trees set out.” This careful counting of the land’s resources, aside from showing Freeman’s success at homesteading, closely echoes Strong’s calculations of the resources available within the United States.

This fascination with legitimizing the expansionist project with numerical delineations and ownership demonstrates the 19th century fascination with taxonomizing and categorizing. McClintock writes, “the Victorian fascination with origins, with genesis narratives, with archeology, skulls, skeletons, and fossils ... was replete with fetishistic compulsion to collect and exhibit that shaped the *musée imaginaire* of middle class empiricism” (40). McClintock is speaking within a Victorian, European context, where imperialism is placed within a context of differentiated spaces and colonized inhabitants; she specifically looks at the various conquests of Great Britain. I would argue that this same proclivity towards taxonomies, when transferred to the

United States expansionist project— which operates under the denial of historical time— is transposed to the categorizing of the present and the future: the land, the trees, the number of acres, the dimensions of the habitable dwellings and the profitability of yield.

This proclivity towards taxonomies also provides something for which the homesteaders were desperate: a way to sharply and clearly produce a division between themselves and the still-present, though absented, Native American. Native Americans, during this time, were presumed to be moved to Oklahoma under the Indian Removal Act instituted by Andrew Jackson in 1830, but in reality were still present throughout the Western territories. Several thousand Native Americans were, in fact, fighting with both the Union and the Confederacy in the American Civil War, with skirmishes in Arkansas, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico (Dunbar 9), and in the same year as the Homestead Act, the Sioux Uprising occurred in what is now Minnesota. While the desire for numerical data, in many ways, functioned to reaffirm and bolster the borders of the United States, codifying and listing them— this many acres contains this many trees, this land contains these structures—, this affirmation also served to distinguish the white settler from the Native American, as Richard Dyer writes:

The border is also of course between red and white peoples, which in turn specifies the nature of the border, namely that it establishes a border where there was none before. This is so not because there was no confrontation between white and red before this, but because the reds were borderless people, who had no concept of boundaries and of the order and civilization that this bespeaks in the white imagination ... White cultivation brings partition, geometry, boundedness to the land, it displays the fact of human intervention, of enterprise.” (33)

Because of the legislative “partitioning” required by the Homestead Act, and the “crisis” of the present moment pushed by Strong and other expansionists, the “citizen” of the Homestead Act could not only affirm his or her standing against the borderless Native American “other,” but also simultaneously remain safe from the more subtle threats that Strong outlines, like drunkenness, certain religious practices, or immigration.

This production of the United States citizen through the project of expansion and the creation of borders is a project which is not unique to the late 19th century. One thing that has shifted, however, is the changing language surrounding the project of citizenship through the creation of borders. Namely, the American citizen no longer produces a homestead, rather, he or she lives in the “homeland,” which linguistically functions in similar ways to the homestead, through producing a sense of citizenship through exclusion and boundary-making. The homeland is a space which is also ahistorical, but in a slightly different way than the homestead is. Rather than the homestead’s erasure of history, allowing the settler to enter into a void, the term “homeland” seeks to present a sense of artificial history: this land is demarcated for the citizen, and always has been. As Amy Kaplan writes, “‘homeland’ connotes an inexorable connection to a place deeply rooted in the past” (58). She also writes:

Many immigrants and their descendants may identify with America as their nation but locate their homeland elsewhere, as a spiritual, ethnic or historical point of origin. Many go back and forth between two homes-- for instance, New York and the Dominican Republic. ... The idea of America as the homeland makes such dual identifications suspect and threatening, something akin to terrorism. To paraphrase Bush, you are either a member of the homeland or with the terrorists. What



a terrible irony the idea of the United States as a homeland must be to Native Americans. (61)

Indeed, as Kaplan notes, the term “homeland” accomplishes the same erasure of bodies, as neither term recognizes or acknowledges the original inhabitants of the land. Both terms also rely on the idea of “home,” which translates to the “intervention” and “enterprise” of turning land into marketable resources: domesticating the land for use, namely, the production of security for the citizen.

In Kaplan’s essay on the use of the term “homeland,” she walks through a number of modern uses of the term, pointing towards the shift in signification which occurred alongside the addition of “security” as a moniker, translating the idea of homeland into a uniquely imperialist term, one of stringent nationalism and denial of actual origins in favor of affective patriotism. In his book, *Cities Under Siege*, Stephen Graham takes these ideas even further, discussing the “Foucauldian boomerang” of imperial projects within the modern era, where the security measures taken to ensure security for the United States in foreign countries is instituted likewise in American cities. At this point, it is critical to note a key difference between the homestead and the homeland: the former is rural, and the latter, urban. Within the landscape of American history, the United States citizen has undergone a change, wherein he or she was produced under the 19th-century fantasy of the yet-to-be-inhabited homestead, and then, in the modern epoch, within the cultural zeitgeist of the security state within the urban homeland.

The homeland, as Kaplan reads it, is held together by a tension of insecurity, because “the homeland is a fundamentally uncanny place, haunted by prior and future losses, invasions, abandonments. ... The homeland is haunted by all the unfamiliar yet strangely familiar foreign

specters that threaten to turn it into its opposite” (63). It is this threat of “the opposite” which has created the assumption of the normative United States citizen throughout history. Participation in the project of citizenship depends on the ability to distinguish oneself from the other/opposite, through the construction of actual borders and buildings within the homestead claim, through the perception of racial purity wherein one is assumed as normalized and non-threatening, or through the invocation of consumer possibility and participation within the modern homeland. Despite the vast changes to the landscape, including both the actual and imagined movement from urban spaces of the arrived immigrant, to the rural spaces of the homestead, back to the urban space of the modern city, the United States citizen has always been constructed by borders, linguistically accomplished through the deployment of words like “homestead” and “homeland.” These words, as Kaplan makes clear, are powerful affective signifiers, a fact which both Josiah Strong and George W. Bush were well aware of in their attempts to mobilize the public towards first expansionist, and then imperial projects. As a condition of the mobilization, one must first be hailed as a participant, as capable of action, and, most importantly, as a citizen; it is only out of the space of citizenship and inclusion in the national project that one can assert the expansion of the borders that one claims as his or her own within the national context.

We see how both Josiah Strong’s work in *Our Country* and the 1862 Homestead Act worked in tangent to produce a vision of the United States that not only erased the Western territories into a landscape void of history and bodies, but also produced and activated the idea of citizenship as an ahistorical and affective possibility. These historical moments point towards the ways in which the United States has developed as a unique nation, focusing on the development and production of its own borders rather than, until recently, the direct legislative control over

colonized nations. Although the United States certainly asserts its dominance on other nations through myriad methods of control, as authors such as Grandin and Graham make clear, the hyper-focus over its own borders mirrors the United State's hyper-focus on the question of who is and who is not permitted citizenship; which, admittedly, makes considerable sense when one considers the United States immigrant history and the anxiety of infiltration that has been a part of American life since its inception. The United States citizen, therefore, is formulated within the affective and actual creation of bordered spaces, just as he or she has been throughout history. Then, he or she is deployed to expand and develop these spaces as a key part of the expansionist, and now imperialist, United States national project.

This impulse presents a picture of the way that Americans understand their own identity in the face of the national ideal. In order to continue with the theoretical and definitional foundation of my larger project, I am moving this understanding of identity in a further direction. First, I aim to accomplish this by addressing my own identity within the scope of this project, and then secondly, by providing a reading of the term "Evangelical" within American culture. This definitional encircling of the Evangelical identity develops alongside and within the understanding of American patriotism, both contributing to the discussion of how borders are developed and instituted within the United States, and furthering the foundational understanding of how purity functions on a variety of levels— political, personal, religious, and cultural— within the United States of America. Moving from American identity in general terms into the smaller cultural phenomenon of the Evangelical church, and then, finally into the personal realm of sexual experience, these co-centric circles of identification coagulate together to perform a overarching emphasis on purity within each form of identity.

## **The American Evangelical: A Definition**

My own journey with the Evangelical church began at a very young age, certainly as young as I can remember. Raised in a conservative family surrounded by conservative families, the word “sheltered” evokes visions of farm sheds in Iowa, golden retrievers, and the deep red carpet of a small church-*cum*-school where myself and my three siblings would sit on Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, Wednesday evenings, and school days from 7:45 until 2:30, repeating the mantra *ad nauseum*: “Washed in the blood, are you washed in the blood? Would you be clean from the burden of sin, are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?” Admittedly, I have very few memories from my time in Iowa, most of them sifting back in images and dreams. I remember lying awake at night, terrified, in the way only a child can be, that my family would be raptured in the Second Coming of Christ, and that I, sinful and small as I was, would be an oversight and would somehow have to negotiate the post-rapture landscape on only a combination of my wits and weaponry. Films like the grainy 1972 end times thriller “Thief in the Night” were regular watching in my pop-culture-starved household, and occasionally I still wake up, sweaty with images of disappeared people, piles of clothing withered on the floor where they had stood at the exact moment of extraction. As a child, I was sure I would wake some morning, just as the actors in the film did, and find my family members transformed into heaped clothing. My childhood self didn’t imagine I would last very long, left behind at the Second Coming, and only hell would remain for me on the other side.

I am certain that my years spent as an Evangelical Christian early in life were, primarily, emotional ones, reflected back to me in the glossy exaggeration of youth. Perhaps I was presented too early with questions of eternity, death, sin, punishment, and, primarily, the paradoxical

necessity of being pure in the face of one's own constant impurity. Without the aged logic of a self-aware mind, my childhood was a series of highs, brought through the engagement and support of the close-knit community— moments when I was alike, when I was embraced and surrounded by sameness— and encumbering, horrifying lows, where I made the connection between my own petty misbehaviors and the overall fallen nature of mankind: doomed and impure. I was put on sleeping medication for my insomnia in sixth grade; the year after we left Iowa for Illinois, where I encountered a brand of fundamentalism entirely different than that of the prior, tiny, rural community: the megachurch.

Looking for a new church home in the suburbs of Chicago was a scene entirely different than the small town, four walled churches we were used to. Churches here were complexes, sprawling buildings with “libraries” and “patios,” “welcome tables” and “education centers.” There were entire wings for Sunday School classes, and nursing mothers had a special room with one-way mirrors next to the main sanctuary. The junior high and high school youth group had its own building entirely, with donated couches, oversized posters, pool tables, and a coffee bar. These churches were, and are, as much of a community center as the church in Iowa had been, but the size of the church led to other issues: more social gaps between poverty and affluence, more concern with appearances, more anonymity, less responsibility to the church as a whole, and more concern with demonstrating one's connection to the church through cultural signifiers.

The American phenomenon of the megachurch is not one to be quickly dismissed, even, or perhaps especially, in this age of growing secularism. Megachurches rest throughout the United States, present in 46 out of the 50 states. A megachurch is defined as a church with membership over 2,000 members, often ballooning vastly beyond that on an average Sunday attendance

(Bird). Currently, there are over 1,300 churches with over 2,000 weekly attendees, and over 50 churches with “more than 10,000 weekend worshipers” (Vanderbloemen). For example, Saddleback Church in Orange County, California has a weekly attendance of 20,000 people, as well as nine outposts that operate throughout the week, including one in Afghanistan for soldiers. They also have an “internet campus” where one can participate in the weekly series through Youtube links, podcasts, iPhone apps, Twitter handles, and blog posts. California’s Orange County also hosts the Crystal Cathedral, Calvary Chapel, Rock Harbor, an outpost of Mars Hill church, and Mariner’s Church in its megachurch lineup. Megachurches are often concerned with the question of “expanding the fold,” or bringing in as many people as possible each Sunday. Many describe megachurches as particularly susceptible to the label “seeker-friendly,” which often sanitizes and packages the gospel message for easy consumption by a person new to the ideas and culture of Evangelical Christianity. In America, megachurches are continuing to grow in both size and influence, backed by large congregations concerned with the biblical mandate to “spread the Good News” of salvation. In a recent article in the *Washington Post*, author William Vanderbloemen, speaking about the megachurch Mars Hill, claimed it is, in fact, “too big to fail,” after the head pastor, Mark Driscoll resigned, leaving his church without the charismatic leader it collated around. However, because of the multiple outposts of Mars Hill, in three different states, as well as the sheer size of the congregation— over 12,000 worshipers on a single Sunday— the church will likely continue, despite the lack of leadership within the central campus. These churches, despite a structure that leans heavily on a central figure, are programmed to work like massive corporations, with similar business strategies, plans for expansion and marketing, making them a growing phenomenon in American society.

In Illinois, I attended one of these Bible churches with my family: “Bible Church” being a key moniker for “Evangelical.” If one believes in the critical components of the gospel message— that humankind is sinful, that Christ died on the cross and rose again to redeem humankind’s sins, and that he will return eventually— then that person, regardless of actual denominational affiliation, is permitted full access to the church, despite other possible doctrinal variations. In this way, the megachurch can open its arms to “recovering Catholics,” Anglicans, Protestants of all kinds, Lutherans, Presbyterians, charismatics, Methodists, and “non-denoms,” without concerning itself overly much with the doctrinal variations that split these denominations apart in the first place. This allows a megachurch to grow unfettered, for the most part, by disagreements about baptism, the Eucharist, eschatology, ecclesiology, or any other numerous interpretations of the doctrines of church life and culture. While one would hope that this form of inclusion and doctrinal diversity would serve to enhance the dialogue and depth of the church experience, my personal experience in various megachurches, both as a participant and then as an academic observer, proved otherwise: rather than grow an atmosphere of open inquiry, megachurches tend to cater perpetually towards non-offense. Tough questions are often reduced to the extortion to merely to “love God, love others.” If the Kingdom of Heaven requires you merely to be present, then why scare people away with discussions of actual doctrine and interpretation? The word “Bible” in the church’s title claims that they take their cues directly from the Holy Scripture itself, obscuring the fact that these scriptures are perpetually interpreted by both individuals and communities.

Here it is important to note, however, that the megachurch does not necessarily translate into a non-judgmental, all-accepting community. While often doctrinal differences are intention-

ally left fuzzy, cultural and political differences are highlighted and a kind of political hegemony is presented as a critical component of “what it means to be a Christian.” The two most obvious examples of this, of course, are currently homosexuality and abortion. While doctrinal variations are often overlooked, these two issues are often presented as the litmus test for “true Christianity.” This emphasis on the political and the cultural, when presented as the doctrinal issues which validate one’s participation in the Evangelical church, as will be discussed later, is a significant example of the way in which the affective participation in church life is presented as the defining moment of inclusion or exclusion. This became increasingly apparent throughout my participation in the church, particularly as I began to look at these emotionally-charged issues with a greater understanding of the way that Evangelical Christianity transitions politics, and political issues, into church doctrine.

From attending the Bible church with my family, I moved to a conservative Christian “interdenominational” college (another term which points towards Evangelical tendencies), I bounced around through various churches, few of which asked for more participation in their culture than attendance on Sunday mornings, which I often did, although my somewhat harried undergraduate life often left me fast asleep in the back rows. Misgivings about the church began to settle in as the fault lines of my academic studies widened and my ability for faith grew increasingly shaky: but this is not a story about lost or recovered faith. It is a story about the way that church culture shapes and shifts the lives of its inhabitants, and my story is only a tiny, ongoing fraction of that, a story that prompts and produces this academic work, certainly, but let’s not lose sight here: the Evangelical church in America is a phenomenon which has shaped the very perception of what it means to be American, whether or not one ascribes to its tenants of faith.



This study seeks to uncover the affective, emotional, and even melodramatic basis of belief in America, and to direct attention back to the Evangelical tendencies that can be equated with citizenship in the United States.

I am an educated, cisgender, straight, white American woman, who was raised in fundamentalist, Evangelical churches; I am outing my identity because of its hegemonic status, a status which much be recognized in order for it to not be normalized. As Richard Dyer eloquently states in his book, *White*, “It has become common for those marginalized by culture to acknowledge the situation from which they speak, but for those who occupy positions of cultural hegemony blithely carry on as if what they say is neutral and unsituated” (4). In order to de-centralize, and ultimately undermine the project of hegemony, it must be made strange. If calling myself out as an identity situated at the privileged intersections of culture will serve that purpose, alongside the dual goal of establishing my credibility of speaking to and against a culture— Evangelical culture— that is marked by a violent suspicion of outsiders, then I will gladly locate myself, rather than operate under the reader’s critical assumptions. If you are either wondering or concerned: the contestation between myself and the role of a higher power is, admittedly, ongoing and complex, although I certainly no longer ascribe to the “washed in the blood” theology of my youth and my visions of the afterlife have receded far from a fluffy heaven and terrifying, sleep-stealing hell into something much less concrete and far more comforting. Personal theologies aside, however, the question of purity continues to smolder in my mind, and ongoing relationships with members of fundamentalist sects of Christianity continue to arouse my pity, amusement, and my fear over the unacknowledged, unhindered perpetuation of the many myths of purity.

The question of Evangelical church, then, and how it stands in connection to both purity and American identity, is a difficult and multivalent question. Moving forward, it becomes necessary to develop a working definition of what is meant by the American, white, Evangelical church. Is it the church of my youth, with its small community and potluck dinners, or is it the churches of my later life, full of programming and life-enhancements and crowded sanctuaries? The answer to this is, of course: yes. The Evangelical church is many things, and demarcating its borders is a job which is not only impossible here, but has been a main definitional aspect of the Evangelical church itself, paradoxical as that may sound: the Evangelical church is that which is seeking to develop and define what (and who) constitutes the Evangelical church. This is, of course, not the only aspect of Evangelicalism, for then many would fall into that category, but a hyper-anxiety about who is or is not included in “the fold” of Christian reach is necessarily a facet of the church’s thinking. More than this, there are a number of other signifiers that construct the Evangelical church in America, both historically and in the modern era.

The American Evangelical church is a hugely influential and pervasive subculture, situated in the complex intersection of personal, public, and political life. Uniquely difficult to define, the Evangelical subculture resists standardization, although a number of loose themes that exhibit themselves repeatedly can provide a more accurate description of the subculture and related modes of worship. Mark Noll, in his historical overview of the American Evangelical church, points towards its origins as early as the peace of Westphalia in 1648, when a tidal wave of evangelical sentiment washed from the European continent to the shores of the nascent United States of America. According to Noll, the strain of Evangelical Christianity specific to the United States is most easily defined by a few simple distinguishing characteristics. They are: a firm insistence

on personal (rather than institutional) belief, filtered down from Martin Luther and Protestantism; an aggressive insistence on spreading the “Good News” of Christian salvation through evangelism, (hence the name “Evangelical”); the uncanny ability to adapt to and influence culture through shifting social standards, capitalist practices, and political influence; and the rampant plurality of possible doctrinal variation and worship styles (24). While Evangelical Christianity is certainly a religious doctrine, usually pared down to the most simplistic form of creed (“Jesus died, rose again, and will return”), it is also a community that is marked, much more significantly, by its conflicted relationship with culture, both rejecting it as sinful and fallen, but then, for all intents and purposes, imitating it as nearly as possible, sanitizing the “fallen” parts and redeeming the remainder for capitalist consumption. The American Evangelical church is a culture that is constantly defining and re-defining itself both alongside and against mainstream culture in America, not only in terms of popular culture, but also in terms of ideology, belief, and historical understanding.

Molly Worthen, in her book, *Apostles of Reason*, addresses the trouble of defining American Evangelicalism. She eventually settles her definition around a set of questions, which, in tandem, are intrinsic to Evangelical life: “how to repair the fracture between spiritual and rational knowledge; how to assure salvation and a true relationship with God; and how to resolve the tension between the demands of personal belief and the constraints of a secularized public sphere” (4). This definition, rather than instituting a creed to which Evangelicals adhere, poses the possibility for Evangelical culture to work on a different register: one which is constantly involved in a series of questions, acting out various responses and engagements. Each of these questions Worthen poses hold within them a distinct tension: spiritual or rational, salvation or

condemnation, personal or public. The Evangelical life is one full of cultural tension: a life presented within the various responses to these paradoxes, alternately rejecting and accepting the culture at large.

Because of this process of oscillation between acceptance and rejection of mainstream American culture, the Evangelical church in the United States is all at once everything and nothing, falling within nearly every point on the spectrum of these tensions. Without a central mode of organization which bestows the title of “Evangelical” to various churches or organizations, the title is self-proclaimed, according to the perceived definition of and adherence to Evangelical values and cultural signifiers. The term “Evangelical” is a shifting signifier of social and political position, and a loose community of people from across political boundaries, class divisions, ethnic identifications, and racial categories, as well as numerous creeds and worship practices. In order to deal with the Evangelical church in the United States, one must immediately recognize the fact that no study, however broad, can accurately capture the complexity and variance within such a phenomenon, but these blurry borders, in many ways, are the critical to the definition of the tenacious Evangelical culture. The reason for this lack of definable boundary hinges not only on the insistence on personal rather than institutional belief, but also on the communicative forms of the Evangelical church, the power of cultural signifiers, and the use of emotional affect to form cohesive identities, both historically and currently. In this study, I am specifically addressing these cultural identifications, and the role they play in creating an identity that is purely Evangelical.

Here we must address another difficult component of this work: the use and perception of the language of Evangelicalism itself, which tends to hinge off of a sense of exclusivity and inac-

cessibility. Many of the phrases used in Evangelical Christianity provoke a reaction which is troublesome to me, perhaps because of the use of what I will term “dense rhetorical signifiers,” wherein specific repeated words and terminologies recall entire concepts or cultural associations, fulfilling a critical role in the organization and construction of Evangelical identity. Many of the phrases embedded in the semantics of Evangelical Christianity are neither eloquent phrases nor kind ones, and an academic mind can jump towards assumptions about the kind of people who would use such phrasings, or, more broadly, such polemical logic and reasoning, such un-nuanced rhetoric. Is it possible to repeat the language of the Evangelical church without the automatic assumption of superiority and condescension? Perhaps the language of Evangelicalism sounds hyperbolic— a tone which fails to adequately and appropriately validate the concerns and culture of its participants. But herein lies the problem itself, and hence, my authorial dilemma: Evangelical Christian language is by nature dramatic, saturated in the landscapes of good versus evil, a quite literal *psychomachia* of demons and angels. There is little space for ambiguity in the language of Evangelical culture, and in writing with and about it, I find myself fighting a desire to allow the words to speak for themselves: which is also problematic. Such rhetorical melodrama is often unpalatable to the modern academic, and immediate assumptions produce a distaste for the subject of inquiry, a fact that is deeply troublesome to me, and an area I hope to open for wider investigation. This, of course, calls attention to the relation between Evangelical culture and melodrama, a relationship which I explore a great deal more throughout this project.

Therefore, my use of language is, I hope, balanced against the assumptions and expectations of my readers, while at the same time investigating and pushing against the emotional impact of the language used in Evangelical culture. It is very nearly impossible to write about the

culture of Evangelical Christianity without some aspect of wariness; the Evangelical church, after all, is touted as a supermajority, while simultaneously claiming status as a minority subculture: a paradox which lends it power in both regards (Moss 20). It is a culture which, as numerous authors point out, often promotes ideological or political viewpoints that appear to run counter to the larger academic projects which promote diversity, liberalism, or engagement with critical perspectives based on scientific inquiry. Worthen addresses the question of the apparent Evangelical insistence on a lack of reasoning or critical thinking. She states, “Evangelicals have earned a reputation for swaddling one of their abiding questions-- how to reconcile faith and reason-- in prickly certainty. . . . ‘Extreme orthodoxy betrays by its very frenzy that the poison of skepticism has entered the soul of the church; for men insist most vehemently upon their certainties when their hold upon them has been shaken,’ Richard Niebuhr wrote. ‘Frantic orthodoxy is a method for obscuring doubt’” (8). She states that, “In the free marketplace of American religion, where preachers survived by hawking their wares to the greatest number of people, head counts at the baptismal font— not the coherence of doctrine or the mastery of new knowledge— became the test of the church” (8). This kind of adherence is, of course, achieved not through linguistic subtlety, but rather by language which shocks, separates, and solidifies ideology.

The question of language as it relates to the Evangelical church is far from a modern one. Returning to Strong’s *Our Country*, he addresses the construction of a nation, specifically one which identifies itself as Christian, setting this identity in contrast to the Catholic, the Mormon, the Socialist, the Drunk, and the Immigrant, each of which he sees as a threat to maintaining a common national identity. This desire for communal definition is linked immediately with the necessity of speaking English, but, more than this, the necessity of maintaining common lingu-

tic signifiers which will uphold and develop personal identification with both the Christian church and the American nation. He writes, "It follows, then, that the Anglo-Saxon, as the great representative of these two ideas, the depository of these two greatest blessings, sustains peculiar relations to the world's future, is divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother's keeper" (161). In the next sentence, he moves to define "Anglo-Saxon" as "all English speaking peoples," prioritizing linguistic identity above racial and national identity, as well as proffering the possibility of educating the other into Christian belief and American identity through teaching the English language. Historically, a common language was the foundational building block for common religious narration, and created the possibility of distinguishing oneself as both "Christian" and "American." But more than just the spoken, written word, the common modes of communication he structures in the text allow for the disavowal of one who does not "speak the common tongue" of Christian living, capitalism, sobriety and American national identity, necessarily encountered through English. Strong's work itself, as I address at greater length later, presents a vivid example of the way in which language use can produce a powerful form of affective, imagined community, recalling Benedict Anderson.

For example, in the biblical recounting of the Tower of Babel in the book of Genesis, the reader is presented with the unequivocal relation between speech and action, a completely equalized ratio between reality and representation. It also relates an early example of language as a key component of community formation and regulation. The text reads:

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel— because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth. (Genesis 11:1-9)

In the story, the punishment for arrogance, for the hubristic pride of humankind joining together in a single goal, is the confusion of languages. With this comes the arrival of distinctive communal barriers, the marking of “chosen” and “unchosen” demarcated by speech, and the confusion and disorder of penetrated borderlines between scattered peoples. Speech, language and word are fundamental to the Christian; since the days of Babel, speech has functioned to delineate one community from another, conversely, binding people together.

In looking at the Evangelical church beyond demarcations of creed and belief, other forms of identification arise, centering on the use of rhetoric and language. Language, in many ways, permits a commonality of experience unique to members of the Evangelical community regardless of location. Out of similar language and rhetoric, the Evangelical church forms a basic



culture to which one is initiated through understanding and participation. In Benedict Anderson's work *Imagined Communities*, he addresses the power of rhetoric in producing a sense of identity, which may be more powerful than communal signifiers based on actualities, such as locational proximity, similar appearance, or mutual goals. Rather, Anderson argues, identifications are constructed around imagined commonalities between people who may, in reality, hold very little in common. In fact, Anderson states in regards to the United States, "Language had never been an issue in the American nationalist movements. As we have seen, it was precisely the sharing with the metropole of a common language (and common religion and common culture) that had made the first national imaginings possible" (197). This construction centers around the use of language and communication, which have long been powerful tools of this rhetorically-based religion. Evangelical culture is, at its core, a spoken, written culture, developed out of tent-revival sermons and sentimental narrations of failure and redemption. The modern Evangelical experience is one of learning a new language: it is fundamentally inseparable from the words used to describe it. And it is, at its center, the process of re-forming and presenting the self through words: through, more specifically, *the Word*.

The Evangelical church structure is a structure that relies heavily on language, speech, teaching, exhortation, and a firm belief in the power of words to heal, counsel, direct, engage and empower. Rising out of this emphasis on language, a community begins to collate around a number of repeated signifiers and narratives. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the repeated concept of creation, the fall into sin, and an eventual redemption, seconded only by the narrative of an encroaching and destabilizing world, one that threatens and seeks to destroy the believer. These two counter-narratives present in Evangelical thought— the cyclical process of birth and

rebirth, and the decline of culture at large— help to delineate the Evangelical from the outside world. Looking first at the role of the “creation, fall, redemption” narrative, one can see the communal identity formation at work within the linguistic landscape.

This triple theme of “creation, fall, redemption” is exhibited in the grand scope of the biblical text, but it is also constructed around the life of the individual believer. The biblical text includes the speaking-into-existence of the heavens and the earth, the fall of Adam and Eve precipitating original sin, the Israelites’ struggle for repentance through the Judaic law, the eventual repentance of mankind through the person of Jesus Christ and his eventual return to earth at the moment of rapture. Evangelical Christians, in the service of actively spreading the “good news” of the gospel, namely the foundational creed of Christ’s death, resurrection, and return, are exhorted to construct a personal “testimony” which will reiterate the theme of sin, repentance, and redemption in one’s own life. In its most basic form, a believer points toward how he or she was formerly living in sin, not exhibiting the traits of a “true Christian,” but underwent a process of rebirth, wherein he or she was transformed into “a new life in Christ.” This cyclical process is then repeated numerous times in the life of the individual believer, who is constantly seeking to find and remove the sin in his or her life, directed towards the various possibilities of unholy living through sermons, books, podcasts, other Christians, and self-surveillance, then submitting this sin to the processes of repentance and redemption. Inclusion within the Evangelical Christian community is often dependent on the believer’s ability to tell such a testimony about oneself; because of the necessity of individual belief, rather than participation in a set formation of rituals, members of the Evangelical church construct their identity around the cyclical narrative and one’s own ability to align oneself within the overarching narrative of the biblical message. Ex-

amples of this abound across culture, including celebrity Evangelicals such as Tim Tebow, the Heisman-winning quarterback for the NFL's New York Jets. Tebow's carefully crafted testimony explains his conversion with the simplified, saturated language of Evangelicalism.

“When I was a boy, I'd been going to church and I'd be hearing about Jesus. And how he'd died on the cross for my sin. But I hadn't asked him into my life, I wasn't sure what that meant. I was worried: if I died, was I going to go to hell . . . I'm not sure, I don't know, I'm scared. So I went out and I asked my mom. . . and I asked Jesus to come into my heart. And I put my trust in him, and from that day I have been 100% sure that when I die I'm going to heaven. When I put my trust in him, my life changed. Now I know where I'm spending eternity. And because of that, I have success. . . So it doesn't matter what happens in the future. I don't know that is going to happen in the future. But I know who holds my future.” (“Tim Tebow”)

In this short example of a personal testimony, Tebow presents the key components of proclaiming one's faith in the Evangelical narrative. Fear of punishment, a sense that something is wrong, and the sudden linguistic turn to optimism and reprieve from the feelings of unease associated with one's “fallen” past are nearly always where a testimony begins. A disregard for the near future in favor of the eternal outcome is also a significant component, as is the use of stock phrases—dense rhetorical signifiers—such as “asked him into my heart” and “put my trust in him”: two examples of the metaphorical language that is used within the personal testimony in order to allow a vast number of people to ascribe their own emotional experience onto the experience of the speaker. Testimonies such as this nearly always ascribe to the “creation, fall, redemption”

narrative, aligning the individual speaker with the overarching metaphorical landscape of Evangelicalism, and instructing the listener or audience in the proper linguistic formulation of the Christian narrative.

Throughout this work, the problem of language is confronted again and again. The use of language in the Evangelical church forms a culture that is profoundly specific to the United States of America, and that serves to highlight the numerous perceptions of an American self-hood. Contained deep within this question is the idea of purity, a structure which regulates and controls a great deal of both Evangelical and American culture, one that is, like the words spoken around the community of Evangelicals, produced, practiced, and performed throughout the history of the United States.

Not only does language function to develop and define Evangelical Christianity, there are other key demarcations used to establish borders around participation in Evangelical culture, one of which is the perception and construction of racial identity. Returning again to Dyer in his book *White*, he constructs an argument that the fascination and focus on the aggressive maintaining of boundaries and borders is, in many ways, an exceedingly white characteristic. While working back from the contrast between Native American's perception of land and the white settlers restructuring the land based on cartographical lines, Dyer draws attention to the fact that being white is a question of defining the self against the other, within a uniquely privileged landscape of white = human. While other non-white identities certainly do this as well, drawing distinction around identities that are based on imagined or perceived boundaries, Dyer points out that to be white must necessarily be dictated by absence of abject features, the perpetuating of other racial identities as sub-human or lacking the mental, moral or intellectual development of the white

race. This is often accomplished by the maintenance of strict boundaries, whether they are cartographical, intellectual, sexual, or simply visual, recalling the 19th century's taxonomizing of racial characteristics through legislation and science (Elliott 614). This hyper-focus relates very closely to the construction of the Evangelical church as it is defined in the mainstream United States as a white phenomenon, distinct from the versions of Evangelicalism we see rising up in communities where racial identities are other than white. While there are Evangelical churches that are predominately black, Asian-American or Latino, these are not what the mainstream media or even Christian publications refer to when they discuss the role of the Evangelical. While these churches fall under the same masthead, often their project is significantly different, and the church itself fulfills a very different role than a white Evangelical church. This dissertation focuses primarily on the role of the white church, as, perhaps, the ultimate manifestation of the idea of boundaries as a formation of self-identification.

So while there are numerous manifestations of the Evangelical church, I am actively reading into the phenomenon of the white, American Evangelical church, tangentially focusing on the ways that the white church uses these other formations of Evangelicalism to strengthen and develop its own standing as the primary, defining instance of what it means to be Evangelical in the United States. Other Evangelical churches in America, including Asian-American, Latino and black churches, are experiencing a period of extreme growth and development, yet still maintaining their sense of separation from what most non-Evangelicals refer to when they speak of "Evangelical." And while this is certainly true in America, as soon as you leave the borders of the United States, the definition of Evangelical again changes vastly, depending on the demographics of those who proclaim their faith.

The fact of the matter remains as true as when Martin Luther King Jr. spoke it, “Sunday mornings are the most segregated morning of the week.” Whiteness is, as Dyer points out, the generally assumed definition of “normal” in the United States of America. Moving forward in this paper, I am stuck with a dilemma, which is my own use of the word Evangelical, and the way in which I, perhaps for the sake of my time and yours, do not specify the “white, American Evangelical church” at every usage. In sections where whiteness is integral to the questions being asked, particularly as we look at the ways in which the white Evangelical church defines itself against the other racialized versions of Christianity, I do use the descriptor, but in other locations I have chosen not to use it, simply because the understood and accepted meaning of Evangelical in the United States is one of assumed whiteness, as Worthen states, “Many, especially in the African-American community, view evangelicalism as a white word and claim the label rarely, and always cautiously” (5). While I am at times in a quandary over the lack of the descriptor, I also hope to avoid redundancy in the common usage of the term.

My goal is certainly not to participate in the all-too-common work of erasing the black (or immigrant, or Asian-American, or Latino) body from the academic project. Rather, my goal is to investigate the particular ways in which the white Evangelical church structures itself as the norm within the United States’ society, and how that emphasis has an historical context which has been mired in the question of racial and sexual purity. Rather than focusing on the minority cultures which were colonized into the Evangelical project and the vast injustices done to them throughout colonial history, I choose to focus on the Evangelical culture itself, to investigate, as Cesaire states, “how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence,

race hatred, and moral relativism . . .” (35). This “boomerang” of colonial impulse is evidence throughout the United States’ history, just as it is evident now. This paper necessarily forecloses some investigations in this regard in order to destabilize the production of whiteness in identity formation in the United States.

Moving forward, the investigation looks at another manifestation of the emphasis on delineating borders within the national project: the importance of personal purity. In the final section of this introduction, I look at the definition of purity as it is used within this project. Purity permeates throughout the formations of identity already discussed, including American identity and Evangelical identity. In terms of defining the role of purity, it is necessary to establish the relationship purity has with the larger culture, both being created by and creating cultural performances. These performances become the cultural artifacts under investigation in the rest of this work; defining purity within its cultural context provides the foundation for establishing the gendered forms of emotion within the investigation of melodrama and the Evangelical church.

### **Personal and Public Purity**

Throughout human history, the quest for and achievement of purity has made the human race human. The ability to distinguish the self from the other is held in place by a permeable boundary ultimately created by societies themselves; it is the enactment of rituals that teach us the acceptable boundaries of normative behavior. Purity rituals are found in cultures across the globe to varying degrees, each fulfilling a similar function: enacting a process whereby the self, whether the self of the community or the self of the individual, is made distinct and separate from the other. One washes one’s hands to remove dirt and flushes excrement away; nation-states constantly attempt to contain homelessness, sickness, vagrancy and mental illness in institutions

and away from the public eye, keeping the “respectable” population safe from their impending threat. There is a constant fear of losing purity, for purity is, in essence, oneself, the boundary line of one’s own sensibilities, providing the self with a sense of “that is not me” and “I am not that.” The inhabited physical response of disgust, fear, or even outrage prevents engagement with the unclean, as it is defined by culture: purity does not marry one’s father; it does not eat dogs; it does not allow children to play in filth. Each culture defines its participation in the project of purity individually: a religious group chooses one set of standards, a family another, a political organization yet another. The cultural collaboration of purity is produced through a reaction to the processes of abjection; the development of the rituals surrounding purity are created in response to the fear of the abject collapsing into the very fabric of society.

Julia Kristeva, in her book, *Powers of Horror*, provides foundational work on the definition of the abject. While it is nearly impossible to nail down a distinct and uncontested definition of “that which is abject,” Kristeva’s work enumerates the nuanced performative work of the abject, establishing its place as a necessary component growing out of an ordered and progressive society. One distinction that Kristeva makes at the very beginning of her work is the difference between object and abject, which is a fundamental difference when one considers purity. This distinction allows for the action or agency of the abject, granting the abject the power to infiltrate, to collapse inward, forming a distinctive difference from the passive inaction of an object. As Kristeva writes, “Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you . . .” (4). Abjection, in other words, is that which must be controlled. Out of this desire for control stems the orderly systems of soci-



ety: law, morality, science, religion (2). As these systems of order function, abjection develops as the ever-present threat of collapse over the systems that have been built as self-defining societal measures. It is evident that measures against this collapse must be taken. If the abject has agency manifesting itself in the power to act in a threatening manner against the powers of order, then something must be done to rescue society from the abject. This “something” takes many forms. One of these forms, I would posit, is the constant and ubiquitous development of purity, the creation of forms that seek to hold the abject at bay within society.

Purity, defined as a shifting standard of cultural significance, is also linked very closely with the necessity of hegemony. For something to be considered pure, it must be considered free from that which contaminates, from that which deviates from the normalized, often ritualized, patterns of belonging. In this regard, purity is not available within contexts that are already considered contaminated or tainted. Cultural purity, by the same count, depends on a cultural hegemony, wherein each member of the group: be it racial, ethnic, national, political or religious, has a characteristic that is the same as other members in the group, whether it is language, a physical characteristic, country of origin, or belief system. The anxiety of purity, therefore, is the fear that something other, whether it be a person, a belief system, a disease, an ideology, a contaminant, or any other culturally-defined manifestation of “impure” would penetrate the boundary of the self.

While this is clearly evident in the larger scale of colonization and expansion, it also profoundly affects the perception of sexual purity, specifically the construction of virginity within the church. This dual use of purity: as a political system, and as an individual method of identity-construction, performs the oscillation between the personal and the political that has been a facet of American society from the beginning. Sexual purity, of course, has a number of definitions,

with various levels of stringent or lax sexual practice. Primarily, sexual purity within the Evangelical church falls into three significant beliefs: the abstaining from sexual intercourse before marriage, monogamy within the marriage relationship, and a related purity of mind, wherein one refrains from possible sexual contaminants that may encourage one towards thinking about or engaging in either pre-marital sex or adultery. These expectations, as will be discussed in later chapters, are heavily gender-based, and each gender bears dichotomized responsibilities when it comes to upholding these sexual standards. In relation to time, pre- and post-marital purity develops a particular place within the Evangelical ideological cannon, one which merits a great deal of further inquiry. The emphasis placed on this particular rite of passage from one state of being to the next, alongside the rigorous maintaining of borders, both ideological and individual, creates a perfect storm of rules, rituals and restrictions, both stated and unstated. Most of all, within Evangelical, and often Western, structures of rhetoric, virginity is performed as a constant, consistent state of being, despite the ambiguity and temporal permeability of actual sexual practice. Definitionally, virginity constantly disregards its own state of being, defying its own borders from within. In terms of time, the complex insistence on a contained, dichotomized, sanitized, and most of all, static states of being— that of being virgin or non-virgin— when juxtaposed against the actuality of an individual's personal expression of sexuality throughout a lifetime, presents a myriad of difficulties. In moving forward towards the relation between 19th century sentimentality and the modern Evangelical emphasis on the affective powers of emotion as a form of capital, the roles of virginity and sexual purity stand as powerful examples of the movement towards an American identity that perpetually obscures its own performance of itself.

The role of purity provides particular cultures— especially white culture— with a sense of security, giving a way to define space, borderlines, integrity. Purity, despite the desire for it to be otherwise, is not a static moment in time or a single state of being, purity is a transition, a perpetual becoming, a constantly moving process as one searches for a perpetually shifting target. Purity is presented as a constant question for several reasons: not only does the goal, the target, the aim of purity constantly fluctuate against the lines of one's own identity, but the necessity of purity is, by its nature, constantly in question. In this work, the question of whether or not it is necessary to remain or to be pure is not the primary focus; this is a question that the individual person or community must answer for itself: will I willfully cross over into the realm of the impure? Will my culture understandingly identify as transgressing against the line of purity? These questions are, in their nature, already engaging in the dichotomous reading of purity, entering into a discussion of self/other, pure/impure, defining one action against the definition of the other. Out of this rise communities on the fringes of society: the motorcycle gang, the side-show performers, the civil dissonant. These are the people who understand, acknowledge and agree with a particular society's dominant definition of what is and is not considered "pure," and who validate this definition by structuring their identity, or having their identity structured by society, in such a way as to invoke the reactions of fear, disgust, or hatred from the general public. The question of purity, however, is a different question. Should purity itself exist? Should it stand as the indelible marker of our social and personal identity, should it continue to be the way cultures produce and maintain its communities?

This question, while permeating this work, is very nearly a paradox: I remain convinced, if only as a matter of faith, that this is not a problem of possibility, it is perhaps a failure of imag-

ination. We cannot imagine a world where purity does not form and construct our very perception of society. We cannot fathom an existence wherein our physical bodies do not react to that which is harmful and destructive with fear, rage, disquiet, disgust and repulsion. Purity is as essential and embedded in our lives as the reaction of pulling one's hand away from an insect, as feeling your gorge rise at the unexpected corpse, as pulling on rubber gloves in order to clean the vomit, the feces, the blood and the urine, the seepage or a human body escaped from its own borders. Do we need it? In many ways, yes. Purity is what forms out identities, our societies, what differentiates one culture from another. Purity keeps us clean, it keeps us healthy, it moves us beyond animalistic poop-slinging into moments of beauty and distinction. Could we function without it? I'm not certain; this is this line where imagination cuts short, knowing of culture, tradition, and the rituals we use to pass values down, one generation to another. And then, another question rises in the wake of these: would we want to? Do we wish to remove ourselves from the onslaught of "purity," the dominating dichotomy of dirty and clean, appropriate and not, dangerous and welcomed? I do not have an answer for this either, although perhaps we are nearer to that now than ever before. In looking more specifically at the various ways in which purity manifests itself, questioning the very bodies involved, the historical moments and appropriations which made our present view of purity possible, and the profundity of the impact it has had on our performances of the everyday, we can better assess its necessity and our own desire for adherence, whether innate or learned.

However, the kind of purity I am dealing with in this work is not as all-encompassing as this, so perhaps we can address these questions in a scale more appropriately suited to a work such as this. The purity I am addressing is of a particular flavor, certainly working within the

same ontology as other manifestations of purity across various cultures, societies and religions. Purity within the Evangelical Christian church is both a significant and under-addressed topic, primarily because of the insidious influence that this manifestation of purity has on the larger American culture, both in terms of the culture of patriotism and political structures of legislative control. The purity structures put in place by the American Evangelical church have, throughout history, formed and informed our perception of what it means to be an American. With these questions of intent in mind, we can begin to look at the stakes of this project, addressing the role purity holds in this American culture, and whether or not we can continue to ascribe to the dichotomous structures it enforces, transgressing not by assigning ourselves or others locations on either side of the divide created by purity, but rather by rejecting the very premises that create, and re-create, the milieu of pure and impure. In order to begin, we must assign purity its proper form: a performance and a ritual. There is no truth in purity. Purity itself exists only because we, as humans, have called it into being, creation *ex nihilo*.

### **Chapter Descriptions**

Because there is no stable definition of purity, whether sexual, personal, communal, or hygienic, one must always be seeking to maintain adherence to a form of purity. This is a constant battle in many subcultures and societies, particularly those which are marked with a concern over who is or is not a part of the society or subculture itself. In looking at the scope of this project, the question of purity is addressed through three particular facets of a woman's life, three roles that she plays in the course of a lifetime: girl, wife and mother. I posit that these roles, as they are presented in their 19th century melodramatic context and contemporary Evangelical

context, are often constructed as means of maintaining and controlling the desired purity of women within a national context.

In the first chapter, the investigation of girlhood moves through two works from the 19th century: Dion Boucicault's dramatic version of Washington Irving's short story *Rip Van Winkle*, and the 1866 Broadway musical *The Black Crook*. After looking at how girlhood is both idealized and subverted within these two performative works, I turn to an investigation of the gendered emotional forms that are at work within the melodramatic structure. The masculine impulse towards passion is looked at in terms of Josiah Strong's *Our Country* and the Westward expansion of the United States, both of which maintain a focus on future potential and present threat, which then transfers to the body of the woman, particularly the girl, as she is constructed within an understanding of future fertile potential. The gendering of sentiment as feminine prohibits women from accessing the same temporal reality, relegated to the position of cyclical time, as is demonstrated through the sentimental figuring of the character of Lucy in Boucicault's play *The Poor of New York*. These gendered forms of emotion and time are presented in context of the contemporary Evangelical church, setting the groundwork for the continued investigation of how melodrama informs and instructs the present understanding of gendered roles, patriotic identification, and religious practice.

In the second chapter, the inquiry moves into a discussion of marriage within melodrama, looking at the woman in her role as wife. Two plays are addressed here: first, Boucicault's play *The Octoroon*, and secondly, Augustine Daly's play *Divorce*. Both of these plays demonstrate an ideal of marriage and the heteronormative marriage relationship, one that often removes agency from the woman within the melodramatic performative example. After addressing the 19th cen-

tury contextualization of marriage and divorce, the investigation moves toward the contemporary Evangelical example of the purity ball, wherein fathers, or father-figures, bring their daughters to an event where they pledge to protect their daughter's purity, as the girls pledge to remain pure until marriage. This example again recalls the definitional relationship between fathers and daughters, particularly as the girl is constructed within her future potential as wife.

In the third chapter, the third role of the woman is discussed: her role as mother. This chapter looks first at the ways in which men and women attempted to subvert the idealization of motherhood within the 19th century context, through the use of birth control and abortion, as well as by the increased medicalization of the process of giving birth. Looking at birth as a privileged moment that was only accessible within its idealized form to women who fulfilled the optimal requirements of racially-focused United States, the investigation moves to address the role of woman as mother within James Herne's play *Margaret Fleming*. This play demonstrates the powerful affective anxiety of the United States as it sought to develop an Anglo-Saxon, native-born population, returning again to Josiah Strong's perception of an ideal America, and the gendered forms of emotion that helped regulate and control the birth of its citizens. Then, the chapter turns to look at the contemporary manifestations of these same impulses within Evangelical culture, looking specifically at the Quiverfull movement, as well as the ways in which birth control and abortion are regulated within modern society.

This work seeks to address the way in which purity constructs and composes these three distinct phases of the woman's life. While the gendered forms of both emotion and time serve to produce a lack of agency for the woman within these particular contexts, the various means of subverting and challenging the idealized perceptions of girlhood, marriage, and motherhood pro-

duce complex cultural trends, wherein the actual lived experiences of women demonstrate a profound negotiation with the ideal. This is demonstrated through both the 19th century performative examples and the examples of cultural performances within the Evangelical church. However, it is clear that these various ideals of the roles females play within their lifetimes present a powerful demonstration of the particular anxieties that surround the development and maintenance of the United States of America as a country; anxieties over the perpetuation of a hegemonic population, anxieties over the institution of national borders, and anxiety over the purity of its population, both as a political and personal project. This work seeks to highlight and demonstrate the way in which these anxieties, which are often formulated as a present, ahistorical threat to the national project, are, in actuality, rooted deep in the emotional and temporal structures instituted within the performance of melodrama. In many ways, this work seeks to demonstrate the ways in which the contemporary Evangelical church has taken up the mantle of melodramatic structures of emotion and time, with profound implications for the lived experiences the American population.



## CHAPTER ONE: GIRLHOOD

### The Melodramatic Daughter and Gendered Emotion

The first phase of this research is investigating the question of girlhood as a facet of the lived reality of women, but also as a cultural metaphor of temporality and gender relationships in the United States. Girlhood in the United States is a moment of perpetual liminality, understood primarily through its relationship to future potential, a perpetual moment of transition and of becoming. As it is addressed in this work, it is not a phase that is bound to a particular age or moment in one's life, but rather, works as a process of becoming, similar to that of purity: a function of returns, negotiations, and relationships. Girlhood works as a transitional phase, wherein the girl is seen in terms of her future potential as a wife and a mother, prior to her valuation as a being with agency. In relation to the question of purity, girlhood is the starting point, wherein innocence, or a lack of knowledge about sexuality is transitioned, often at a very early stage, into purity, or the choice to remain separate and distinct from corrupting sexual or immoral influences. As the girl moves through this transition, she is perpetually in danger of falling into the corrupting influences of immoral behavior. Therefore, her position as a girl is constantly seen in terms of her relationship to authority figures: the father-figure most explicitly. In this chapter, girlhood is investigated in terms of emotion and time, seen in both in the melodramatic forms of the 19th century and the performance of religious language in the contemporary era. Then, it moves to address two melodramas in which the figure of the girl is presented, first outlining the constructs of idealized girlhood in *Rip Van Winkle*, and then addressing how that ideal is presented in *The Black Crook*, but ultimately subverted within its cultural context. The second section seeks to

define the gendered forms of emotion, and subsequently, time, which allows for this creation of the female figure as girl, first in the 19th century performance of *The Poor of New York*, and then in contemporary religious performance.

### ***Rip Van Winkle***

Melodrama is a theatrical form which, when relegated to the time period known for its development, is rather formulaic and somewhat antiquated. Heroes and villains are sharply distinguished, and few, if any, of the characters undergo any sort of character development or arc within the course of the play. Rather, the melodramatic conflict is often external: character against character, or character against the elements. Additionally, melodramatic form, as exhibited in the mid to late nineteenth century, looks to convey a staunch moral message; we see examples of abolitionist melodrama in *The Escape*, the perils of drinking in *Rip Van Winkle*, or the dangers of immigration in *Margaret Fleming*. While not every melodrama is destined for moralizing, it is a form which lends itself to the embattled, embodied conflicts of good and evil (Horn 3).

Girls are frequent characters in melodrama, because they offer a prime archetype: alternating between the innocent damsel, frequently in distress (Amina in *The Black Crook*), the guileless child, who is able to inadvertently speak the truth to those in power (Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), or the winsome young lady, who is in mired within the coming-of-age process (Lucy in *The Poor of New York*). Since girls are often seen as beings without agency, or under the control of a male figure, they are positioned perfectly to bear the brunt of evil machinations and dastardly deeds. This, of course, sets up the strong dichotomy of good vs. evil that is central to the melodramatic spirit: the good, innocent and pure girl, contrasted with a male figure who seeks

her downfall, often sexually. With this contrast, the melodrama can elicit strong feelings of sympathy from the audience, who easily project the forces of good onto the archetype of the girl in question, applauding her eventual salvation or weeping for her demise. The character of the girl in melodrama is frequently set alongside other male archetypes, a few of which will be investigated here: not only is she seen in contrast to the dastardly villain, she is also set in relief to the protector figure or figures, who are often either her father and/or her lover. The girl figure in its archetypal form exists, in many cases, to help the hero along to his destiny, or to usher him towards a higher purpose. This trope is repeated throughout the melodramas of the 19th century, providing a formulaic presentation of both gender construction and gender relationships. In this section, I hope to address these tropes in a play and a musical, both of which were presented on-stage in the late 19th century, and then move towards addressing ways in which these tropes were disrupted by the larger cultural movements that were occurring during this time, in order to move towards a larger discussion of time and emotion in both melodrama and modern culture.

The first play under investigation is Dion Boucicault's version of *Rip Van Winkle*. Washington Irving's short story, *Rip Van Winkle*, was first published in 1819. It was released in Boston, Baltimore and Philadelphia, and then as a part of a larger collection of short stories by Irving. The story was eventually adapted for the stage, and became famous through the acting of Joseph Jefferson, who, for many years, brought both wit and humor to the "drunken" and "beleaguered" character of Rip (Johnson 3). Irving wrote the story while in Birmingham, England, and begins the publication of *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon*, where the story is featured, with an introduction that questions the role of his own American identity, seeking to assuage his own anxieties over inclusion in the American project of democracy (Plung 70). He includes the ques-

tion of the book's publication in England, as well as an uninhibited glorification of the American landscape, contrasting this against the literary and cultural history of Europe (Irving). This question of American identity in the face of uncertain national borders presents an ideal moment for the hyper-realized gendered relationships to enter into the lacuna created by the wavering national boundaries.

The play itself is far from extraordinary, with quick fixes, simple characters, easily thwarted, almost mythological villains, and the very convenient plot hole of a twenty year gap, in which the actor playing Rip dons a very large white beard to symbolize the duration of his sleep (Mengeling 643). However, the success of the play is unequivocal, with Joseph Jefferson performing the role throughout his long career, first in Washington DC in 1859, then across the globe, in Australia and in London, where the play, revised by Dion Boucicault in 1865, ran 170 nights. Jefferson was, "the mostly widely known, best loved, and wealthiest actor in America" (Johnson 4). After playing the role of Rip in Boucicault's version for over 40 years, Jefferson then passed the character down to his son, who played the lovable old man in a number of early 20th century films. The play was hailed as a success when Jefferson returned from its run abroad, where:

it was then that America greeted the return of the wanderer, proud of the victory of an American actor in an American play in foreign lands. This fame added to the glory of his country, both at home and abroad: his public and private life furnished an example dazzling in the magnitude of its grandeur, and he will forever be a theme of pride to every one in that profession he so eminently adorned. (Jefferson 133-4)

The adoration of this play, therefore, is something to be examined. If Americans were comfortable lauding this play, written by Irving, an American in England, and subsequently presented across the globe as a representative vision of American art; if, indeed, Rip “presides over the birth of the American imagination’ as the ‘guardian angel’ and ‘symbol of the mythic American’” (Ferguson 529), then a deeper understanding of Rip’s role, both as an American, and also, I posit, as a father in relation to his daughter, Meenie, is necessary.

Fitting easily into tenets of the formula melodrama of the 19th century, *Rip Van Winkle* features a lazy-yet-likable man, an alcoholic who is quickly selling away his fortune in order to buy drink (Johnson 5). His wife, Gretchen Van Winkle, is a “humorless” woman, who alternates between despair over her husband’s state and rage against him for his lack of concern for her and her daughter’s well-being. Rip, though attempting to quit his alcoholic tendencies, is continually thwarted by a number of characters who hand him drink after drink, which he never refuses. The main plot centers around Rip getting kicked out of his house by Gretchen after a particularly wild night of drinking, and going into the Kaatskill Mountains, where he meets the ghost of Henry Hudson, a disappeared ship’s captain, who offers him, again, more alcohol. Rip drinks, and after falling asleep, wakes up twenty years later with a white beard and a rusted gun. He returns to his town, where he is mocked both for his appearance and the Loyalist sentiments which have become outdated in the wake of the Revolutionary War (Ferguson 530-1). He is rescued from the unruly mob by Hendrick, Meenie’s beau, who was reported lost at sea and who returns from his seafaring adventures exactly in the nick of time.

The character of Meenie in the play did not enjoy the longevity of portrayal that Jefferson brought to Rip. Meenie was portrayed by a number of actresses throughout the performance life

of the play; in a single year during the play's run, which included 172 performances at the Adelphi Theatre in London, the character of Meenie, as a young girl and then as her older self, is attributed to Mrs. [John] Billington, Miss Conran, Miss Godsall, and Miss Henrietta Simms (Donahue). The lack of fame associated with character of Meenie, particularly in contrast to the role of Rip, points towards the character's relatively forgotten role. The play itself opens with Meenie as a small girl, perched next to her mother, a silent observer to Derrick Von Beekman's demands for money from the impoverished settlers. She is presented by her mother as a tool to gain sympathy from both Derrick and Nick, a man who willfully allows her husband to run a tab on drink. She states, referring to the silent child beside her, "Did you ever see the children of a jolly dog? They are street curs, and their house is the gutter!" (406) This statement regarding the well-being of Rip's child is set in contrast just a few short moments later, when Rip appears onstage; the immediate image is that of the quintessential father-figure. He enters, "running and skipping, carrying one small child pickaback, and surrounded by a swarm of others hanging on the skirts of his coat. He is laughing like a child himself, and his merry blue eyes twinkle with delight" (407). Derrick speaks out this contrast, in case the archetype was not made explicit enough by the image; "The vagabond looks like the father of the village" (407). Rip's position as father-of-all is set against his failures as father to Meenie. Rather, the responsibility for Meenie is passed to Hendrick, a child in the village who promises that he will marry Meenie in the future, pointing towards her inherent value as wife, making her deserving of present protection. Hendrick speaks, "Don't be frightened, Meenie, I'm here" (415). This sense of protection provided by Hendrick allows Meenie to step into the role of Rip's ineffective, sympathetic advocate, calling off

Gretchen's advances and begging her to allow Rip to remain in their home, to little avail. Rip proceeds into the mountain for his long sleep.

In Rip and Hendrick's absences of twenty years and an intermission, Gretchen has married Derrick Von Beekman, who, as the villain of the story, is attempting to take over Rip's lands, and marry Meenie to his nephew Cockles in order to clinch Rip's holdings for himself. Meenie rejects Derrick as father-figure in the second scene of the second act, stating to her mother, "Oh, don't call him so; he is not my father! He is your husband, mother; but I owe him no love" (422). Her rejection again cements Rip's position as the absent father, anticipated and hoped for in his return. Because of the timing of Rip's narcoleptic jaunt into the wildness, he never signed a contract that Von Beekman was presenting to him, telling the illiterate Rip that the contract was merely a formality of the debts between them, rather than a contract which would sign over the entirety of Rip's land to Von Beekman. Rip, upon returning, having never signed the paper, reclaims his land, his wife and his daughter, and Hendrick proposes to Meenie, leaving Von Beekman and his nephew Cockles with no land and a rather sizable bruising to their inflated egos. Everything ends in a predictable fashion, as "it is the veriest potboiler" (Walsh 110). It concludes with the acceptance of an aged Rip back into the community, the shaming of Von Beekman and the eventual marriage of the two childhood sweethearts. No one seems overly concerned by Rip's strange story, and the play ends where it began, with the villagers indulging, yet again, Rip's alcoholic habit (Boucicault 532). Rip returns to his former self, and Meenie has safely passed through the transition of daughter to wife, the unstable Rip-as-father traded for Hendrick-as-husband.

A good deal of slapstick humor, including Rip's dodging about to escape from the flailing broomstick of his wife, the capers over a hidden bottle of moonshine and the nine-pin bowling dwarfs would each have provided the audience with suitable entertainment, comfortably situated within the melodramatic canon. In addition, "good" and "evil" are very clearly delineated throughout the play, although *Rip Van Winkle* comes off as far more mythological than moralistic (Young 551). Rip is good, despite (or perhaps because of) his bumbling, good-humored inebriation (Habegger 886), and so is Meenie, presented as the pure, innocent girl in need of masculine protection, both when she is actually a child as well as twenty years beyond her girlhood. Van Beekman is unequivocally the villain, attempting to steal away Rip's land, wife and child for himself, involving his nephew in his dastardly plots. Between these two poles is Gretchen, who comes across as scolding, but ultimately good-hearted and repentant over her chiding, and Hendrick, the romantic hero, who has been absent when most needed, but who always seems to somehow arrive at the most opportune moments. These characters form a plot which soaks in the zeitgeist of American sentimentalism, with the question of authenticity of both experience and emotion rising out of the micro-familial problems, set within the context of American revolution (Mengeling 643).

*Rip Van Winkle*, as a play, perpetually questions the authenticity of identity. Specifically, this question of identity as it is grounded in the question of time: not the linear, progressive time that is held as an ideal understanding of history, but a shifting, returning and cyclical time of dream-consciousness and historical restructuring. In the play, Rip's character— his identity— remains stable and grounded, despite the huge shift in time that occurs within the play. In the first part of the play, Rip is a relatively young man, with a young child and wife, living more-or-



less contentedly as Dutch settlers of the Americas. He is, of course, notoriously bad at holding onto his land, the use of which he is perpetually selling off for drink, much to his wife and daughter's chagrin. After his sleep, he wakes to a "new" America, one that is entirely familiar, yet entirely strange to him. The portrait of the king has been replaced with a portrait of George Washington and his former home has vanished, leaving only the skeleton of a chimney. The small community has grown and developed, in places for better, in others for worse; but above all, the buildings and the villagers are uncanny, unfamiliar, and, as Anthony Kubiak states, "*unheimlich*, 'empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned'" to the waking Rip, who is disoriented and out of place within his own previous context (83). He is neither recognized nor recognizable, although he is the same person, embroiled in the same struggles of alcoholism and land ownership that he fell asleep to twenty years prior. The landscape itself has changed, leaving his identity dislocated.

Rip has effectively missed the entire birth of the nascent United States of America and is nearly immediately labeled a traitor and a Loyalist for political ideas very much in vogue at the time of the nine-pins bowling incident twenty years ago. However, his personality and indeed his identity, despite the gaping lacuna between his youth and dotage, has remained the same pre- and post-sleep: Rip is, throughout the play, the same bumbling, good-natured alcoholic who somehow seems to fall into the most unpredictably fortunate circumstances: aside, perhaps, from the missing twenty years. Even this gap, by the end of the play, seems to be generally accepted and unproblematic by the citizens at large, as the play moves through a process of forgetting the weirdness of Rip's sleep. His identity is not dependent on time; in fact, time may act in all manner of unbecoming, uncanny ways without affecting the stability of Rip's identity (Ferguson

530). In this way, Rip himself mirrors the anxiety not only of Washington Irving, living in a self-imposed exile in England, but also of both Joseph Jefferson, portraying the stability of the American self on tour overseas, and the American self throughout the centuries (Blakemore 192). Both Irving and Jefferson were promising themselves the possibility of an identity which does not adhere to linear or historic notions of time, an identity which would be waiting for them upon their return to the uncanny, and undoubtedly changed, landscape of the United States.

In this way, Rip performs as the father-figure, at once absent and returning, providing a profound comment on the American relationship with identity (Kubiak 83). Heralded by Derrick as the “father of the village,” Rip’s absence, followed shortly by the absence of his proxy, Hendrick, has left his true child, Meenie, without recourse or protection, aside from entering into another, less desirable patriarchal relationship in marrying Cockles. Perhaps most significantly, Rip becomes a performance of the patriarchal identity which collates around religion: specifically, the particular brand of Evangelical culture which was being propagated in tent and urban revivals during the late 19th century, as well as the burgeoning Social Gospel movement. In many ways, the mythic tale of *Rip Van Winkle* subtly imitates the cyclical structure of creation-fall-redemption, alongside the temporal gaps and deteriorations which have become the milieu of American Evangelical culture. Rip is certainly no Christ-figure, but his interaction with time mirrors the redemption story. He “dies” to the other characters, disappearing into the mountains. None of the other characters anticipate his return, and fall into difficulties and tribulations in his absence. But he returns nonetheless, bringing with him a form of salvation, vanquishing the villain and situating himself within the revised, uncanny, American context. Just as Christ’s eventual return through rapture rose in popular belief alongside the Social Gospel movement (Rauschenbursh

133-4), Rip's eventual return is indeed anticipated and expected by the audience, who, with their prior knowledge of the story, were entranced by the portrayal of Rip's long sleep and return. Meenie herself functions in these moments of anticipation as a proxy for the audience, holding out hope for the return of the masculine protector, first in the form of Hendrick, and then Rip, as he reveals himself to her. Rip chooses her as the first person to whom he imparts his former identity, saying, "either I dream, or I am mad; but I am your father" (429). His patriarchal role as father exists, even in the face of dreaming madness. Meenie accepts this identity immediately, falling into his arms.

This theatrical moment of the gap between pre- and post-sleep was first portrayed onstage in Boucicault's version of the tale, ignored in prior productions of the same tale, which begin with Rip's waking (Kubiak 84). Within the gap of Rip's absence—the absence of the father—in Boucicault's version, the American nation is founded, and by the end of the play, we are presented with a vision of American identity itself, unchanging and accepted in the face of temporal gaps and shifts. The audience is already assuming and anticipating the becoming-American of the characters from the moment the play begins, cued by both a prior knowledge of the popular tale, Meenie's belief in the eventual return, and the general understanding of similar tropes in both religion and melodrama (Plung 66).

Alongside this anticipated identity of the American, the setting itself functions as a non-stable construct, perhaps pointing towards a United States which is lacking the over-determination of European social and class structures, easily changed from Dutch colony to American nation with the change of an onstage portrait. This landscape of the United States is the expression of the uncanny, and the seemingly stable identities of the characters, once Dutch and now Ameri-

can, are simply juxtaposed into the new landscape: at once both familiar and strange. It appears as a constructed hallucination, not only for Rip, but also for the audience who views changes in the setting: the shifting portrait, the crumbling of previously stable walls. The characters of Boucicault's world are both always-already American and never truly American, only able to identify themselves as such arbitrarily and within a hazed lucid dreamscape, mediated by Rip's feelings of unfamiliarity. Unrecognized and easily passed over in the kerfuffle over land ownership and the oncoming marriage of Meenie—his patriarchal duties to his daughter and his family—, Rip's waking into the changed world presents a profound comment on the metatheatrical, melodramatic, and perhaps even the uncanny, performance of the American self within a shifting cultural and political landscape, passed over as if it were a dream, mediated as we are by Rip's sleeping and return.

Gretchen's character presents another significant example of the power of the willful misremembering integral to the question of time and history, and any analysis of this play is neglect to not mention her journey alongside her husband's, as they both construct and inform each other. Many readers of this play describe Dame Van Winkle in derogatory terms, such as Mengeling in his essay on characterization. He writes,

Dame Van Winkle is no more than a 'sharp tongue' and a 'tart temper.' One knows no more of her than this, either as to physique or costume... the only notable exception to this is in reference to her good and tidy housekeeping, but in second glance, what could be more in keeping with those drab and unimaginative practicalities of which she is emblematic. (645)

However, this is underselling the character of Gretchen-as-wife, who is attempting to hold together her family against Rip's drunken bartering of land for drink, and who, after his disappearance, portrays her own version of the forgetfulness of American history. In the absence of her husband, Gretchen has married Derrick Van Beekman, and has since been abused, both emotionally and physically, watching the seemingly inevitable loss of her daughter and her fortunes. Just as Meenie cannot escape her position as daughter in relation to Rip-as-father, Gretchen cannot escape the role of wife in relation to Rip-as-husband, and indeed, the alternative wifely role that she inhabits in the second half of the play is presented to the audience as far worse. However, it is significant to note that this is hardly any different than her life with the perpetually drunk Rip was, in fact, she is materially better provided for in many ways. What Rip did passively, Derrick does much more deliberately, but that does not change the fact that both men soundly mistreat Gretchen, for which she blames herself. In the second half of the play, before Rip's return, she remembers Rip fondly, laments her treatment of him when he was present, and despairs her present moment with Derrick. She is never truly redeemed through the course of the play, but shuffled from one incapable husband to the next. Her position as the nagging wife, as well as the emotional appeal of Rip and Meenie, creates a character who is unsympathetic to the audience.

Gretchen's presence in the play serves another purpose, however, which is to provide a foil for our understanding of Meenie. Meenie is constantly highlighted against Gretchen, often speaking directly against her actions in regards to her treatment of Rip. Because of Gretchen's abrasive personality, the audience is increasingly capable of sympathizing with the perpetually sweet Meenie. As Meenie moves through the play, she is working towards a transition from girl-into-wife, but I would argue that she is unable, within the play, to complete her transition from

girl into wife, due to the audience's desire to view her as the perpetual girl. In the same way, Gretchen is never seen as a girl, with any characteristic of innocence or helplessness, but rather merely as the perpetually scolding wife. Meenie is positioned as a future wife from the moment Rip speaks to Hendrick about their eventual marriage, but in many ways, particularly with the mirroring of absences between Rip and Hendrick, she is merely substituting one father-figure in Rip for another in Hendrick, never losing her innocence or lack of guile, evidenced by her immediate acceptance of the aged Rip and her perpetual belief in Hendrick's return. Gretchen expresses neither innocence nor lack of guile, avoiding all semblance of girlishness, which causes the audience to reject Gretchen as abrasive. Gretchen is never seen with sympathy, because all of the audience's sympathy must be spent on Meenie and Rip.

The audience is made to favor Rip through Boucicault's language, despite his bumbling incapacities, and therefore, regards Gretchen suspiciously as she berates him for his treatment of both her and Meenie (Mengeling 645). Because of this, we are all too delighted when Gretchen welcomes him back with open arms, forgetting nearly as eagerly as her his past trespasses and his inability to make good choices regarding the well-being of his family. Just as American culture easily replaces the past within a mythologized, homogenized, easily understood and dichotomized context, Rip Van Winkle's youthful transgressions are forgiven and forgotten in his dotage, despite the fact that it is clear in the text he will not change his habits of drinking and poor management of his assets, to his family's loss. Rip is, after all, good, fulfilling through his presence the archetype of father and husband, despite his failures as an individual. Indeed, as an old man, he is free to sit and drink and tell stories for the entertainment of the town's children, without the shame and disgrace associated with a young man's inability to ap-

appropriately engage in the patriarchal role he has been assigned. A reading of Gretchen's character reiterates the stability of Rip's identity as husband and father, and the way in which the characters accept and affirm the temporal gap of the play, proclaiming a history which seeks to artificially reconcile the disparity between setting and character that has developed during the long sleep.

*Rip Van Winkle* is a play that leans against a melodramatic and metatheatrical structure, tying American identity to the idea of shifting histories and willful misremembering of prior sins. In this way, its theoretical underpinnings point towards an often obscured, but intentionally significant question of what it means to be American in terms of time: is it a hallucination, a furthering of a 20-year revolutionary sleep? Or is it an unshifting identity that refuses change despite the fluctuations of time and space? Or is it an identity that somehow combines these two realities: both a performed identity which is masked as the ultimately stable, unchangeable aspect of being; both dependent upon and ignoring the reassignment and misremembering of history, while at the same time forgetting the cycles and repetitions experienced in time? These questions, when placed alongside temporal gaps evidenced in Rip's tale, create a powerful affirmation not only of the emphasis placed on the necessity of a specific and constructed identity, but also the way in which this identity is developed around the perception of time.

Girlhood in *Rip Van Winkle* is presented as a archetype, with the figure of Meenie transitioning from the control of the father to the control of the husband, without losing the sense of perpetual innocence that makes the audience sympathetic to her plight. She is eternally hopeful for the return of the absent father-figure, and her belief in the return is rewarded with the victorious ending. Her purity as a daughter and eventual wife is never questioned throughout the play,

but presented as a stable construct, just as Rip's identity as father remains the same throughout the "dream" and "madness" of his twenty-year sleep. This facet of girlhood is essential to the archetype: the unchanging purity in the face of obstacles, unswayed by events or changes, even moments as extreme as the reformulating of an entire national identity. However, girlhood is not only presented as a stable identity, but is also seen in terms of future potential; much of Meenie's worth is bound up in her eventual marriage to Hendrick, and the horror the audience feels at the subverting of that marriage by the villains of the story. Her girlhood has value because of her eventual role as wife, a role which makes her characteristic purity even more necessary and compelling. Moving forward, we examine this future potential in the figure of the girl more closely, particularly as it related to the expectation and subversion of purity.

### ***The Black Crook***

*Rip Van Winkle* provides a critical look at how time— and the desire for stable identities within time— works within melodrama, in a fairly obvious fashion: it is a play that is centered in the idea of time itself, and owes many of its plot points to the manipulation of temporality. Thus, the characters can easily be demonstrated as stable identities against the changing landscape, marked by the future potential of return in Rip's case, or marriage in Meenie's. However, this production of temporality is apparent in melodramas that structure time in a far more subtle fashion. One such instance is in the production of the first Broadway musical, *The Black Crook*, written by Charles M. Barras. This musical was presented at Niblo's Garden in New York City in 1866, the year after the Civil War ended. The musical, both in performance and in production, illustrates how temporality fluctuated around the moment of the melodrama, simultaneously clinging to an idealized past and inhabiting a lacuna of atemporality, all the while, pulled along



into the zeitgeist of a burgeoning America, full of future potential and growth, both demonstrated and subverted through the figure of the girl.

In the second half of the 19th century in America, a shift was occurring. No longer tied down by hierarchical structures of society, such as the family and the church, young people were moving, unattached, to urban centers. As Karen Halttunen describes, “the raw country youth entering the city to make his fortune was coming to symbolize the American-on-the-make” (3). In the urban environment, young men and women were met with the prospect of something new and all together thrilling: the possibility of interacting with peers without the controlling voice of authority speaking down to them. This understandably led to a great deal of anxiety, not only on the part of the family “back on the farm,” but also anxiety concerning the fundamental structure of the developing American societal structure. In Halttunen’s book, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*, she addresses the repercussions this urban shift held for the young man in particular, addressing the anxieties surrounding the newly urbanized male, susceptible to the lure of hypocrisy and poor judgement. For young women, the movement cityward provided a different, and perhaps more complex, set of anxieties as young women distanced themselves physically from the role of daughter, able to establish an identity aside from the control of a father-figure. This moved the girl away from an overly-determined archetypal form and into a liminal position of becoming. Without the controlling voice of the father/husband to attest to her purity, the girl was open to new narratives, inhabiting a dangerous position of possibility, simultaneously mirroring the development of the nascent United States. These anxieties found a locus on the body of the female actor, who became a manifestation of the unease of the United States of America as it grew into awareness of itself as a capitalist, democratic nation.

The characters of young women onstage in the 19th century were frequently seen as either void of agency and scripted into the archetypal pure child, moving from a father's control to a husband's (e.g., Meenie in *Rip Van Winkle*, Amina in *The Black Crook*), or alternately, full of the potential to reject the established standards of purity, embracing their sexual identity and becoming the sensual seducer of men (e.g., the dancing girl, the ballerina, the chorus girl). However, these are both a reductive perception of historical interactions between the sexes, and the characters presented onstage do not accurately reflect the reality of the actors who portrayed them. In understanding the female actor embodying the available narratives, it is also significant to note that, rather than being confined by these narratives offstage, she was also coming into both economic capability and social mobility, compounding her identity within questions foundational to identity of the United States in a moment of growth and futurity.

The 1866 production of *The Black Crook* blurred the lines between the ballet dancer and the prostitute by relying on the shock and seduction of scantily clad women performing for the primarily male audience. Beyond the appeal of nearly naked bodies, however, the script of this performance also produces a narrative of the young female as either seductress or potential sexual victim, playing into the assumed narratives of the woman as sexually available, either as prostitute or as wife. There is a striking relationship between the identity of the female actor and the temporal structures that hold both a reductive history and a promising futurity over an engagement with the present. The fact that the female characters cannot seem to escape the onstage narrative of the victim or the seductress signals the anxiety of American society in defining the place of women in the urban landscape, but it also provides the possibility of assessing the larger narra-

tive at work offstage, wherein young women were performing the social anxiety of a nation searching for a stable and productive future.

In the musical, *The Black Crook*, there are three primary women, each of whom exhibit a different narrative of female sexuality. Amina, the darling of the production, is a helpless and innocent girl, the unknowing heiress of a large fortune, stolen away by gypsies in her infancy. She is engaged to the dashing handsome Rodolphe, who, as a simple and hapless painter, cannot afford her dowry. She is instead engaged to the dark and sinister Count Wolfenstein, who, secretly broke, is counting on stealing from her not only her sexual purity, but also her fortune. Dame Barbara is the bumbling foster-mother, who, after selling off her foster-daughter to the highest bidder, becomes an unfortunate seductress, made laughable by her attempts at winning the heart of Von Puffengrutz, who is himself a “corpulent and rubicund” fool. She provides a foil for Amina, allowing the audience to revel in Amina’s sympathetic girlishness, contrasted to her own bumbling, regrettable attempts at fulfilling her sexual desire. Rodolphe, the sure hero of the production, must not compete for the heart of Amina, which is already his, but rather the gold necessary to marry her, thanks to her foster-mother’s malicious machinations. The primary plot conceit of the musical is, in fact, that of an economic transaction, with the guileless Amina as the commodity.

The third significant woman in the production is Stalacta, the immortal “Queen of the Golden Realm.” Her narrative is also one of money: she is the protector of “glittering wealth” and must keep it from being “despoiled.” She is a character of male fantasy, brimful of monetary well-being, sexual promise, and safe distance from 19th century reality. She is the fearsome fairy warrior, untouchable by the world of man, and a likely attempt by the producers to get as much

revealed skin as possible, something that was much easier if the female actor was portraying a classical deity or non-human being. Stalacta is the character who most exemplifies “the ‘barbaric splendor’ of the production” (Allen 115). One need only regard the number of amphibia, amazons, frogs, birds, fairies, sprites and naiads called for in the production to assess the possibilities for pleasurable and exotic costuming of the dancing girls in Stalacta’s court, and exotically costumed they were. *The Black Crook* was constantly testing the limits of what could be revealed onstage, and was a “five-hour assault on the senses and libido” (115). Impassioned preacher Charles B. Smythe railed against the show in a gesture that only amounted to free advertising, women attending the show were heavily veiled so as to not be identified with the dancers onstage (Gintautiene 82), and the “corps du ballet” was full of completely inexperienced dancers with exclusive quality of good legs (89). Mark Twain wrote concerning the performance, “Those girls dance in the ballet, dressed with a meagreness [sic] that would make a parasol blush. . . Moreover, they come trooping on the stage in platoons and battalions, in most princely attire I grant you, but always with more tights in view than anything else” (95). One does not need to look far both in the script of the play and the portrayal of the women onstage to see ties between payment and sexual availability. Olive Logan, a woman’s suffrage leader and former actor of the time wrote about the performers, painting the young women into the narrative of hapless sexual victim, “Stripped as naked as she dare-- and it seems there is little left when so much is done-- she becomes a prize to her manager who knows that crowds will pay to see her, and who pays her salary accordingly” (Shteir 30). While the perceived connection between “real” prostitution and the 19th century leg show may have been highly exaggerated by the imaginations of the masculine public, one need not downplay the significance of the exchange of money for pleasure in

shows such as *The Black Crook*. This perception of exchange reiterated the archetypal role of the girl, was under the economic control of the father-figure, while simultaneously playing off of the presumption of purity expected of her youth. Because the chorus girl disrupted notions of purity by revealing her legs to the masculine audience, she danced a thin line between the daughter-who-must-be-saved and the prostitute, perhaps even confounding the two.

The perceived sexual availability of the dancers and chorus girls during this time points toward a few fundamental impulses. One facet of history that must be noted is the changing perception and possibilities of women in the public sphere during this time. Women's suffrage was beginning to congeal into a movement, and with the rise in urban culture, women were no longer exclusively confined to performing their roles in the moralized confines of either the parlor or the brothel (Butsch 390). With this shift in society, productions such as *The Black Crook* were acting out a comforting narrative for a profound masculine anxiety. Onstage, they could see young women fulfilling traditional roles that were on the verge of a massive shift. The musical was banking on the need to assuage the nostalgia of a more patriarchal landscape, where authority collated around masculine forms of authority, uninterrupted by social reforms and Ladies' Leagues. The gentlemen of The Union Club, in their lower-right hand box at Niblo's Garden, could, for the space of the performance, define themselves as the financially viable gender, paying money in order to have their desires filled, reaffirming their position as historically stable.

*The Black Crook's* 1600's setting itself enacted a form of nostalgia, where women fit comfortably into narratives of economic transaction and easily understood gender performances. There was the potential sexual victim, like girlish Amina, ripe for being saved through marriage by the honorable gentleman; the seductress, like Dame Barbara, against whom they must guard

their money and their honor; or the fantastic and sensual warrior woman, like Stalactic, the classical conjuring of the masculine imagination. With these as the available roles for women within the plot structure, men could easily place the dancers onstage within the same narratives. In any situation, the relationship between the economic transaction and the sexual availability of the performer was central, offering the men a measure of reassurance in their own sexual narrative and the viability of their own economic superiority. *The Black Crook* spoke not only to the sexual fantasies of the men with the revealing costumes, including the “Pas de Demons” dance sequence where there were no tutus at all, only tights (Odom 36), but also to the economic fantasies of the men, where they could nostalgically invest in a world where women were purely an available commodity, easily understood and controlled.

However, the story of the women performers of *The Black Crook* is not so simple as pure masculine superiority as provider through economic means, recalling an idealized past for the masculine observer. The production process of the show itself serves to trouble this interpretation, and point towards a more nuanced understanding of gender-relations of the time. The financial expenditure of the show itself was something that was unrivaled in the post-Civil War boom of New York City, and the female performers were inhabiting a role that mirrored the economic landscape of a post-Civil War America. While Amina was being dowered away to the highest bidder by her foster-mother and Stalacta was protecting her wealth from constantly despoiling men, the female dancers were inhabiting an economic system in flux, a moment of redefinition as America came to understand itself as a free market.

New York City, while low on talent as far as ballet girls were concerned, was not low on funds. While a large portion of the country was floundering under the inflation of greenbacks and

the war debt, struggling through Reconstruction, the northern industry towns were a place of rare prosperity, ushering in the beginning of the Gilded Age. The production of *The Black Crook* made its finances no secret; the amount of money spent on sets and costumes, as well as the cost of importing of dancers and paying their salaries, became a critical advertising trope for the show. In September of 1866, the New York Times published:

To give our readers some idea of what it will cost to bring out this piece we will enumerate a few items: Digging cellar and alteration in stage, \$5,000; labor of fifty men, \$6,400; machinery, properties, scenery, dresses, etc., purchased in London, \$3,000; transportation amounting to 110 tons, \$500; properties, wardrobes, etc., purchased here, \$1,000; scenery and salaries of artists, \$3,000. Besides this, there is the advance money to artists brought from Europe, transportation and salaries since they landed here, amounting to over \$7,000, making an total outlay of over \$25,000 before the piece is performed. (Gintautiene 64)

Many of the dancers in the performance were brought in from other countries, as America at the time did not have the necessary talent to perform such a ballet-heavy show, and foreign dancers added a level of excited buzz to the incoming production. The prices of the exotic were noted, and these foreign dancers, together in concert with the less talented and less paid “corps du ballet” illustrate the complex possibility of women in a working environment, not in the domestic sphere of the pre-Civil War era, but in a public space, where they were an integral part of the shift towards social mobility and new possibilities of exchange.

In her book, *The Freedom of the Streets*, author Sharon E. Wood points towards the increasingly widely-available phenomenon of the dance hall and theatre as a boon not only to

women's employment, but also as a key step in allowing women social mobility outside of the home, even for those who were not necessarily employed by these kind of establishments. She writes, "Respectable women and girls came to Bucktown willingly— to earn a living on the stage or simply enjoy an evening of dance and flirtation. In some ways, their presence challenged a system that tightly circumscribed women's access to urban space..." (214). This mobility was fraught by the fact that it was often "entertainment for men on men's terms" (214), but it did present an image of the young woman hitherto avoided by the public eye of society, disrupting the notion that young ladies were appropriately confined within the domestic space from childhood until marriage.

The female performer in this era inhabited a liminal position in society. Playhouses in the 19th century in America were a unique space, compiling the strata of society in a single architectural structure. Lida Parce, in the magazine "The Progressive Woman" published in 1909, wrote: "Let us divide the female population of the cities— it is in the cities that women work most outside the home— into three classes: matinee girls, women who work, and ladies" (10). If one takes this structuring of female society, the theatre is truly the one place where each of these three women were allowed the possibility to mingle freely. The matinee girls were a distinctly middle-class, American phenomenon, composing an entire range of "old and young, married and unmarried, who . . . by their patronage, maintain the daytime shows that do a thriving business in every town of considerable size" (10). These women were often the ones who aspired to be dancers themselves, the ones from whom the unskilled background dancers were recruited, calling attention to the changing face of girlhood in America (Butsch 388). Upper-class ladies were often heavily veiled when they attended the theatre, and unlike the matinee girls or working



women, were accompanied by their husbands or a chaperone. Regardless of social position, each of these women was provided a space in the theatrical venue, as Wood writes, “in the 1860s and 1870s, ... theatre owners were attempting to attract respectable women by expelling prostitutes from their traditional haunt in the ‘guilty third tier’...” (228). Without the immediate association of prostitution with attendance at a theatrical event such as *The Black Crook*, the space opened to an entirely new audience of young women, both attended and unattended.

Not only was Niblo’s Garden an architectural space of social interaction and mobility, *The Black Crook* itself was a composite of high-art imported from Europe and the beginnings of burlesque in America. It has been hailed the first “real” American musical theatre, but the dances it included were almost exclusively ballet, an art form brought from Europe and much praised for its artistry as both “poetry” and “religion” by American critics. Olive Logan, while decrying *The Black Crook* for its show of bodies, wrote:

[The ballerina] is a dancer, and loves dancing as an art. That pose into which she now throws herself with such abandon is not a vile pandering to the taste of those giggling men in the orchestra stalls, but is an effort which, to her idea, is as loving a tribute to a beloved art as a painter’s dearest pencil touch is to him. (Pullen 95)

The obvious strain between the use of ballet and the scandal of the costumes was critical to the appeal of *The Black Crook*, which could maintain just enough “class” to attract ladies, unlike productions such as *Mazeppa*, where Adah Isaacs Menken appeared in flesh-colored tights and a tunic, strapped to the back of a horse to play the naked Tartar chieftain. This performance lacked the vestiges of talent or artistry, and was almost exclusively attended by men (Dudden 157), despite Menken’s claiming, “I am an artist” (Shteir 26). While the plot of *The Black Crook* was

seen as pure drivel, the scenes, spectacle and skin promised enough to keep any audience member entertained. It has been alternately critiqued as a mere “leg show” and the start of a tradition of American women taking off their clothes in public, the beginnings of viable and serious ballet in the United States, and the first truly American musical theatre production. It is clearly not a single one of these things, but rather expresses each of them simultaneously. In this way, the interpretation of *The Black Crook* performs within an undefined position, wherein the interpretation of the work is not classifiable within a single form of art or reserved for a single social class.

Because the American theatre was the space of interaction between classes, and *The Black Crook* in particular exemplified the possibility for entertainment which spanned social structure, the female performer herself became a signifier of social mobility. The performers in the show were not paid a great deal, but that did not dissuade the perception of the dancing girl as a figure who stood either outside of, or able to move freely within any level of society. The featured dancers received as much as \$150 a week and the less skilled performers somewhere around \$15 a week (Dudden 154), which was a large step up from the \$3 a week that a group of chorus girls performing in “The Seven Sisters” received in 1860. While a performer would not get wealthy performing in the show, the promise of fame and possibility was a key draw to the profession (Gintautiene 41-2). While none of the actors of the production and very few of the dancers achieved any sort of fame for their work on *The Black Crook*, the promise of achieving not only a working wage, but also a higher social standing created a huge draw for girls who were seeking both of these things. The possibility of being a dancing girl was a thrilling opportunity for young women, and in the decade following *The Black Crook* both the availability of and the opportunities for dancing girls rose (156). Ballet also rose in popularity as an art form

following, and due to the popularity of *The Black Crook*, many of the artists who came to New York City for the production remained there, thereby raising the standard for American ballet.

Three of the dancers, Marie Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli and Betty Rigl, became famous for their roles in the production. Bonfanti, in particular, provides an example of social negotiation in America (Barker 88). At the time of *The Black Crook*'s opening, she was 21, unmarried, and heavily chaperoned by her mother. She rejected a prosperous proposal of marriage at the urging of her mother, playing out the opposite narrative available to the character of Amina in the production. Bonfanti was considered "peerless" and "artistic" by her adoring throngs. Her innocence and reclusion in social life—the perception of girlishness—, evidenced by the constant company of her mother, allowed her to negotiate her way through social situations, including high society, with much aplomb (89). Unlike other performers of the era, such as Menken, who capitalized on their sex appeal to maintain a certain lifestyle, Bonfanti capitalized on her innocence and artistry in order to distance herself from the association of the "undress piece" in which she performed (Gintautiene 100).

However, a protective mother concerned with her daughter's artistic future and the amounts of celebrity that came with the title of "Première Ballerina" were not available to each dancer in *The Black Crook*. For a middle-class woman to negotiate social mobility as a female performer, especially one who performed dances such as the can-can or the Pas de Demons, she would need to contend not only space between fame and celebrity of being an onstage persona, but also the ties to the prostitute with the perception of sexual availability for a price. This position, poised between the artistic fame surrounding the ballet and the sexual promiscuity of the prostitute, placed the female performer in a place of liminal existence within a nation that was

still entranced with, but unable to achieve, a social structure not dependent on the same hierarchies of Europe. While this embodiment may have been cause for celebration and excitement, it was also clearly the cause of anxiety for men and women who relied on an ordered society as a sense of security. As Tracy C. Davis writes:

Actresses were symbols of women's self-sufficiency and independence, but as such they were doubly threatening: like the middle class generally, they advocated and embodied hard work, education, culture and family ties, yet unlike prostitutes they were regarded as 'proper' vessels of physical and sexual beauty and legitimately moved in society as attractive and desirable beings . . . Society's ideology about women and prescriptions of female sexuality were constantly defied by the actress whose independence . . . Gave her access to the male ruling elite while preventing her from being accepted by right thinking and — especially — feminine society. (70)

It is important to note that "access to the male ruling elite" in this case, does not mean acceptance, as the "male ruling elite" had, and still has, a complicated relation with liminal women. While a member of the "ruling elite" may buy into the onstage narratives and lovely limbs she sells, the socially undetermined status of the female performer was a threat to the order established by clear class distinction. This undetermined existence, while a dangerous place for the female actor and those she associated with, was also an embodiment of the uniquely American aspiration of transition between social spheres, mirroring the transition of the movement from a patriarchally controlled transition from girl into wife, into the agency of women in this era. In

this way, the female performer, like the theatre she performed in, was a locus of this particular American promise.

Women were earning wages for themselves in viable careers, and the possibility of an artistic future led Bonfanti to reject at least one marriage proposal, rejecting the narrative of male nostalgia for traditional family structure for future possibility. The dancers could socialize freely, often without chaperones, and the rise of the matinee girl, who went to the theatre unattended, promoted social acceptance of women interacting with their peers outside the home. Previously, this kind of social interaction was reserved for the “loose woman” who went to the theatre without the company of a man, for the exclusive purpose of leaving with one. This culture of the theatre led to a new confusion over the perceived status of all women, not just of the status of the performers. As Rachel Shteir writes in her history of striptease, “[u]ntil the leg show era, many Americans believed the undressed woman, though she threatened the bourgeois identity, could ultimately be contained in the brothel and the theater. After the Civil War, this perception abated” (26). This was the anxiety of *The Black Crook*: that the women who showed off their legs on-stage were not conforming to the reassuring storyline of the plot; they were acting out the opposite, provoking a change within society that disrupted the narrative of the past, with its silent, unseen and predetermined transition from daughter to wife.

In terms of the narratives suggested to women of either sexual victim or temptress, the performers in *The Black Crook* soundly rejected either from within their liminal space. They were certainly not sexual victims, as they were paid for what they did, some of them very well. Examples such as Bonfanti show that many of them were in control of their own sexual narratives, and not only were they permitted new freedoms offstage, they had discovered a space in

American capitalism for a unique commodity: their sexuality. Previously in society, a woman's sexuality was something that was owned by someone other than her, expressed and determined by patriarchal powers: her father, her husband, the prostitute's john or pimp. As women moved into the public eye in the urban shift, away from the interior spaces of parlors and brothels, the act of viewing itself became a commodity. Because there was no longer a strict dichotomy between the girlish purity of the parlor and the prostitution of the brothel, a woman who could negotiate the space between could claim her own sexuality, and even capitalize on it. As women learned to become the benefactors of this exchange, forms of female empowerment clearly followed. This is not saying that the negotiation of exchanging money for sexual pleasure is not an area that is fraught with violence, injustice, theft and extortion, but in terms of *The Black Crook* and 19th century performance, the narrative of simple sexual victim, the daughter moving into her position as wife, and the woman both sold and saved by men was being disrupted.

*The Black Crook* performance at Niblo's Garden points towards a critical moment in United States history. The dancers involved in the production both reflected and advanced two contrasting narratives, one through the plot and the other through the act of participation: that of the woman under the control of patriarchy, the commodity of a sexual transaction, and that of the woman who was taking control of her own sexual narrative, establishing the possibility for economic and sexual independence. These themes presented themselves at a time when the nature of American societal structure was undergoing the significant shift from the hierarchies of family and church, moving into the urban landscape of peer interaction. The performance itself, vast in scope and fascinating in its spectacle, presented audiences with the imaginative opportunity to see not only the flesh and fantasy of the dancing girls, but also the possibility of an America

where women were seeking agency within a democratic and free-market economy. *The Black Crook* set a foundation not only for these freedoms, but also for the more nuanced performance of a particularly American anxiety: the perpetual search for identity, not only of gender, but also of what constitutes the American citizen in a nation increasingly inclined towards the paradoxes of ultimate freedom and the desire for definition.

This interaction presents a performance of history that places melodrama within a similar historical structure to *Rip Van Winkle*, despite the lack of obvious statements about how time functions. The nostalgic, idealized perception of the past, illustrated through the atemporal, mythical setting and the women's gender performances, presents a picture of history that is both patriarchal and divided from the reality of social changes that were occurring during the 19th century. Additionally, in the same way as *Rip Van Winkle*, this musical points towards the complex interaction between how time is structured and the performance of gender roles. In both performances, perception of time is tied to one's performance of gender: in *Rip Van Winkle*, Dame Winkle's perception of time, with her blatant forgetfulness of the past ills, is contrasted with the female dancers in *The Black Crook*, simultaneously fulfilling the nostalgic fantasies of the male audience while also inhabiting the hope of future potential. Rip and Meenie's inhabiting of the stable identities of father and daughter in the face of a temporal lacuna and the male audience of *The Black Crook* provide examples of justifications of the fluctuations and gaps that become essential to the perception of self, both as an American citizen and as a gendered identity.

Something significant to note here is that none of these perceptions of time are linear, with a strict progression from one moment to the next. Using girlhood as a metaphor, one can easily see how the assumed, linear transition from girl-as-daughter to women-as-wife (and eventually

women-as-mother) was being disrupted, with women developing structures of identity which did not function in a linear way. The dancing girl, the matinee girl, the ballet girl each function to both provide an example capitalizing on the innocence of the unmarried child, but using that innocence as a foil to provide the viewing male with a sense of overt sexuality. Stepping outside of the linear formation of female identity, these women presented identities which worked through the gap, the return and the cycle, calling attention to popular tropes of girlhood, but both dismissing and displaying them. The temporality presented in the melodramas recreate this rejection of the linear, looking both forward and back, through cycles, repetitions, and gaps. These perceptions of time produce a picture of American citizenship and identity that are closely related to gender, as will be discussed further, in terms of both of these theatrical productions, but also in terms of the relationship between the 19th century constructions of emotion and the developing Evangelical constructions of American temporality.

### **Evangelical Time: Passion and Sentiment**

The performance of melodrama and the subsequent emotional forms of performed theatricality, like the revival meeting in the mid-to-late 19th century, work to create very specific instances of temporal structures, which then influence the development of the dual emotional manifestations of sentiment and passion. The fundamental reorganization of time and emotion within the melodramatic structure works in tangent with the creation and manifestations of gender roles, working towards the maintaining of a culture specific to the United States of America. In order to develop these ideas, I will first look at how time is reorganized within an example from revivalist culture and a melodrama, paying attention to the desire for appropriating and reorganizing the past. Then I look at the ways in which this concept of time works to establish the



production of emotion, which, in the 19th century, became foundational to the maintaining of “polite” society. Not only did sentimental constructions of emotion help create ideas of proper femininity, they also worked alongside revival movements to create an idea of masculinity that valued the proper expression of emotion, and even used it as a litmus test for social respectability (Shields 92). Moving between the temporal gap of the 19th century and the present day, we can clearly see how the performance of gender, especially within the Evangelical church, which inherited the legacy of revivalist culture, is rooted in the melodramatic core of emotional displays of both sentiment and passion.

Moving from the subject of girlhood, this second portion of this chapter hopes to delve more into the ways in which the formations of time previously addressed create gendered emotional forms, both for men and women. The girl, in many ways, becomes a significant example of the gendered emotional constructs at work, but the significance of masculine forms of emotion cannot be ignored, both as a foil to the assumed sentiment surrounding the body of the girl, but also as a powerful force related to the development of gender norms in the United States in their own right. The following sections look first at how these forms of temporal reality create masculine passion, both in terms of the 19th century’s emphasis on religious revival, but also in the long history of that revival, which trails into the modern Evangelical church in America. Following that, the final section addresses the role of feminine sentiment, returning the idea of both the girl and the melodrama. The effects of this sentimental understanding of the girl will be addressed at much greater length in subsequent chapters, particularly in terms of the girl entering her role as wife and mother.

### **Masculine Passion**

As the Evangelical Christian community formulates its borderlines around a distinctly narrative mode, time and temporality undergo a shift away from the linear, historical perception of time often understood to be a hallmark of Western thought. Rather than viewing the world through what could be termed an “evolutionary” perspective, which presents a narrative of slow-and-steady progress throughout linear time, Evangelical Christianity presents time as a series of cycles: birth, death, rebirth; creation, fall, redemption. This perception of time, particularly as it relates to language, is created through the use of signifiers which perpetually work to create and control the Evangelical identity. Looking first at the masculine formation of futurity within the Evangelical landscape, and then at the cyclical process of confining the feminine gender performance, I hope to walk through the formulation of time as it works within the Evangelical milieu.

Evangelicalism tends to situate its understanding of futurity within a hyper-masculine landscape. While church life is constructed within an idealized cyclical narrative landscape, the us/them dichotomizing of the church sets this reading of Christian life against a perception of “mainstream” time which is constructed as perpetually eroding towards moral decay. Because of the insistence on the sinfulness of the world at large, as well as the already permeable boundaries of Evangelicalism created from the lack of definable characteristics and central governing body, it is necessary to create if not the reality, then at least the illusion of a vigilant border-guard. This is carefully constructed from a narrative strategy of warfare and attack, of hyper-masculinity and patriarchal governance, creating a rhetorical landscape of what many call “muscular Christianity.” This is more than just manifested in obviously male-centric organizations such as Promise Keepers, which seeks to define and defend manhood within the Evangelical church, but rather, it becomes a general milieu within which Evangelicalism is structured and organized.

Tracing the roots of this emphasis back to the Third Great Awakening illustrates the way in which this muscular Christianity functions as much more than a subset of Evangelical belief, but becomes intricately intertwined with the affective and emotional life of the church, working to reconstitute the experience of temporal reality through an emphasis on waiting for the future redemption of the church.

Looking again at the role of the girl within a metaphorical significance, we can see the affect of this masculine emphasis on futurity. In many ways, girlhood itself is marked by its futurity, particularly in terms of the value the girl holds to the patriarchal systems as both a potential wife and mother. Throughout literature and dramatic narratives, examples are shown of a girl holding value only insofar as she is a potential wife or mother—Amina, Meenie, and Lucy from *The Poor of New York* each demonstrate value within the patriarchal system, but only in relation to the men in their lives—Rodolphe, Hendrick, and Mark Livingstone, respectively. As future wives who must endure hardship before they can enact their destined role, the audience anticipates, alongside the characters, the ultimate fulfillment of these women as they step into the role assigned for them from the beginning of the production. This emphasis on the future potential of the girl, however, is not merely manifested in the theatrical forms of this era, but was a much larger phenomenon, one which stemmed out of both religious and patriotic impulses, both of which constructed masculine passion as the appropriate manifestation of male emotion. Looking first at the Third Great Awakening, we can see how these emotions were developed and demonstrated during the late 19th century.

The Third Great Awakening in the United States was a continuation of the first two “Great Awakenings” which swept across the United States in various intensities from roughly

1730 until the beginning of the Civil War in the South and the end of the nineteenth century in the North. Spurred on by charismatic leadership of famous preachers, the revivals were marked by tent meetings, renewed religious fervor, and a newly-developing form of worship which included songs, impassioned preaching, and alter calls. The revivals relied heavily on the insistence on guilt and sinfulness to draw sinners into a personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ. Theatrical at the very core, Charles Finney, a preacher and “The Father of Modern Revivalism,” proclaimed “the strongest possible representation of the sentiments expressed, then the more theatrical a sermon is, the better” (Bormann 165). The Third Awakening began, according to many historians, in 1857, and its gradual dissipation makes an ending date difficult to decipher. Differing from the prior two waves of religious awakening, the Third Great Awakening was increasingly focused in urban, rather than rural, areas. One particular movement within the Awakening occurred in New York City, where a preacher named Jeremiah Lanphier began prayer meetings which eventually developed into The Businessmen’s Revival. It was a religious revival of upper- and middle-class people, with a strong emphasis on businessmen and other socially significant, male members of the working class. This revival was marked by a number of famous celebrities who converted, including famous boxing champion Orville Gardner; this sparked both curiosity and sensation in the public and the press. Kathryn Long writes that:

out of a desire to proselytize, evangelicals themselves had for years employed variations of some of the same techniques the press used. Some used sensationalism to capture reader interest in moralistic tracts or books . . . Revivals, even the most sedate, incorporated an element of entertainment. The ebullient fervor of camp meetings and traveling preachers has been described as ‘arguably the first,

large-scale, popular entertainments in the United States.’ However theologically questionable they may have been, these practices were developed as strategies designed to attract audiences and to foster the values of popular religion. (43)

Some point towards this moment in history as the beginning of muscular Christianity, marked by masculine overtones, rhetoric of battles and spiritual warfare, and a particular relationship with both affect and emotion, one which moves to shut women out of the “social and psychological space” of the urban revival and religious movements in general (69). This moment in history points towards the developing Evangelical emotional forms, painting men as the guardians of not only the cultural boundaries of Evangelical identity, but also the dominant role in both maintaining and structuring the passionate and affective displays of religious worship.

This male-centered movement then spread to surrounding metropolitan areas, including Boston and Washington DC. John Corrigan writes at length about this particular manifestation of the Third Great Awakening in his book, *Business of the Heart*, where he elaborates on the ways in which the urban Businessmen’s Revival expressed itself, particularly in the city of Boston. He directed attention to the sense of heightened emotion which was “collectively displayed”:

The Businessmen’s Revival in Boston was an exercise in the collective performance of emotion. As it emerged against a complex of overlapping backgrounds that shaped it in various ways, it certainly was not exclusively about emotion. But among the various components that made up the revival, none was more important than the display of emotion by persons gathered in groups large and small, in churches, chapels, theatres, homes, basements, on board ships in the harbor and in outdoor settings. That display of emotion-- in its general contours if not in all of

its details-- conformed to the Protestant expectation for raised affections as part of a revival of religion. (82)

This expectation for emotional behavior, which “conformed” the idea of religious revival, directs attention towards a significant shift in American religion. Emotion was turning to a masculinized form, wherein passionate belief and displays of ardor were contrasted with the more feminized sentimentality of the era. These passionate displays, constructed as a performance of gendered identity, created grounds for the varieties of denominations during this era-- Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, etc-- to meet in the common ground of affective displays. Emotion, in this way, was transitioning into a form of social currency, where religious fervor and, following that, social respectability, was measured by the ability to engage with a language of emotional expression and ardor. Not only was the success of collective meetings assessed by the fervor displayed by the participants, but individual members of communities were positioned socially by their interactions with emotion during these revival meetings. This use of passionate emotional display became the demarcating factor of religious identification, and with the rise of Evangelicalism, maintains its importance as an indication of association with Evangelical religious ideals. Its origins within the particularly masculine 19th century world, aided by boxing stars, businessmen, and blue-collar workers, created the narrative of masculine presence in the church, whose purpose is to define and protect the boundaries of Evangelical identity, often obscured and obfuscated with American national identity and individuals’ sexual virtue. Emotion, in this sense, works together with time, both working to situate the Evangelical male within a particular milieu of militant religious and social identity.

Returning again to Josiah Strong in his work *Our Country*, we see a key example of this form of muscular Christianity, suffering from a profound anxiety related to fear of contamination from outside influences. His words illustrate the way in which this fear serves to not only engage the emotional environment of the church, but also provides a masculine identity formation through militarized rhetoric, restructuring the perception of time around a future moment of redemption from the attrition of society at large. Rather than viewing historical time as a form of advancement, such as evolutionary or linear time would suggest, the Evangelical Christian views the world at large undergoing moral and ethical deterioration, slowly becoming worse and more ungodly, until the moment of rapture, where Christ will return to earth to save his followers. At the end of the 19th century the subset of Protestantism termed “the Social Gospel” believed strongly in post-millennialism, or that Christ would only return to earth to rescue his believers only once they had effectively removed evil from the world, prioritizing the “on earth as it is in heaven” line from the Lord’s prayer. This translated into a sense of Christian morality set in opposition to a sinful and fallen world, one that was perpetually falling further into sin. The outcome of this is a powerful impulse towards social justice and reform as well as the desire of “Christian” Anglo-Saxon-ism to spread throughout the world as “pre-eminently fitted, and therefore chosen of God, to prepare the way to the full coming of His kingdom on earth” with the eternal fate of humanity as stake (Rossbach 181).

Strong’s work is meant as a manifesto for the expanding United States of America, an argument for American exceptionalism and a justification for Manifest Destiny, spreading both English language and American culture throughout the expanding horizon of the West, combining the idea of the Social Gospel with the expansion of American itself. One of the most astounding

ing features of Strong's writing is the way in which he views the encroaching other, naming group after group of people who would seek to undermine the Evangelical, American cause, either through direct malice, or simply the condition of their existence. Hailed in his own time as a "prophetic seer" of the American identity and trajectory, historians have since attempted to distance the American imagination from the "jingoistic" and imperialistic text. While its effect on American culture and society is certainly mitigated through the lens of historical restructuring, the book *Our Country* sold 176,000 copies by 1916, and underwent revisions to update the statistics to current census data. Many scholars agree that *Our Country* had a profound influence on the imperialist urges of the United States in the post-Civil War era, when westward expansion was a huge facet of the American imagination and identity. However, as Dortehea Muller states in her reading of Strong's work, phrases found throughout *Our Country*, "such as 'occupy the land,' 'possess the land,' 'new fields of conquest' and 'world-conquering power' were typical of the militant language of the home missionary" (489). In other words, this type of "militant" rhetoric had been integrated so closely into missionary rhetoric that it no longer caused pause when spoken in such an ardent manner, and, in fact, the book was hailed as "a hand-book of home missions" (490). Many saw the book as expressing an anxiety for the moral trajectory of the United States and a call towards enacting social reform, rather than the conquering and imperialistic text a modern, secular reading assumes, directing attention towards the way in which militaristic language has long been unquestionably integrated into the task of evangelizing.

Not only is Strong's work, alongside other work of this era, marked by a particular discourse of violence, expansion and conquering, it also presents a rhetorical landscape of immediacy, linked closely to the idea of social reform. Social reform, or the expansion of Anglo-Saxon



ideals, is something that must happen *now*: never before has the historical timeline converged in such a way as to provide the optimal moment of bringing about God's kingdom on earth. This trend, of course, is one that is repeated constantly throughout history, without the recognition that generations prior (and likely generations to come) developed the same insistence on the crisis of the present moment, without an historical view which contextualizes the perceived threat against the Evangelical believer. Strong writes at the beginning of his work, "One such phrase lies under the Christian civilization of our land. It is 'the nick of time.' The present hour is, and always has been, 'the nick of time.' ... In matters which reach into eternity, it has always been 'the nick of time'" (iiv). Just a few paragraphs later he writes:

Many are not aware that we are living in extraordinary times. Few suppose that these years of peaceful prosperity, in which we are quietly developing a continent, are the pivot on which is turning the nation's future. And fewer still can imagine the destinies of mankind, for centuries to come, can be seriously affected, much less determined, by the men of this generation in the United States. (1)

This type of language reflects the anxiety within the language of modern Evangelical Christianity today, which also emphasizes the power of the present moment, to the detriment and lack of an historical outlook or contextualization.

This assertion of the dire present, the redemption of the future, and the impulse to take up arms against the "immoral" other is far from a purely historical phenomenon. FamilyLife Ministries, a self-identified Evangelical organization that seeks to "effectively develop godly marriages and families who change the world one home at a time" ("Mission"), presents a "Family Manifesto" on their website which provides a glowing illustration of the use (or misuse) and

quality of historical engagement characteristic of Evangelical culture. FamilyLife is not a fringe ministry in the Evangelical church; it is a massive organization, which uses radio broadcasts, promotional material, extensive publications, conferences, and public internet forums to reach a wide audience, with an operating budget of well over 40 million dollars in 2011 (“Annual Report”). It is “the global, non-profit leader in marriage conferences having reached more than two million people through various FamilyLife conferences since the organization’s inception," serving over 100 counties with a “volunteer network of over 10,000 couples” (“General Information”). I quote this Family Manifesto here at length, in order to exhibit the context within which history functions in Evangelical rhetoric:

During the latter half of the twentieth century the American culture has suffered an unrelenting decline. Although scientific and technological advances have created an outer veneer of prosperity and progress, our inner moral values and convictions have rapidly crumbled. Once, most Americans based their sense of right and wrong on Judeo-Christian principles, which provided them with a solid, biblical foundation for life. Today, a growing number of Americans see morality and ethics as relative and subjective and have developed their own version of "morality" with little regard to absolute standards.

This idea of moral tolerance has been eroding the foundation of the American family and society. Many Americans today have little or no concept of how to maintain a successful marriage and how to raise children to become responsible adults. In addition, a growing number of educators, politicians, and members of the media are attacking and redefining the family, creating a vast amount of con-

fusion about what a family is. Many people today proclaim that "family values" are important, but the gradual shift to moral relativism has led to a great debate about what "family values" ought to be.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "The strength of a nation lies in the homes of its people." It is our conviction that the family is the backbone of the Christian church and of society as a whole. History shows that, if any society wants to survive, it must uphold, strengthen, and continue to build upon the biblical institutions of marriage and family.

The Bible begins in Genesis with the marriage of a man and a woman and ends in the Book of Revelation with the marriage of Christ and His bride, the Church. In between, God provides timeless blueprints for family life, which, if followed in a spirit of humility and obedience, provide us with the only true way to maintain healthy family relationships. ("Manifesto")

In this excerpt, a number of questionable associations quickly bubble to the surface, but rather than debunking the agenda and methods used by this kind of rhetoric (or even the accuracy of historical quotations, as there is no record of Abraham Lincoln having made the stated quotation), it is more appropriate to assess the efficacy of the juxtaposition of doctrine, history, and persuasion, looking at this excerpt as an example of the performance of time exhibited by Evangelicals in their own self-identification.

Throughout this small excerpt from a much larger manifesto, there is a strong insistence on the validity of an absolute, biblical truth; however, standing right alongside the truth is the clear opposition. It is exhibited in the "growing number of Americans [who] see morality and

ethics as relative.” Not only could these Americans be one’s next door neighbors or co-workers, but they are also “educators, politicians, and members of the media,” the constant incoming threat. While the clear definition of the Evangelical self is evident in the juxtapositional rhetoric of the pervasive other, the creation of a very specific narrative in relation to historical significance points towards the complex Evangelical understanding of temporal reality. While the manifesto points towards culture “suffering an unrelenting decline,” this decline only occurs within the context of the past fifty to sixty years, not as a decline which has occurred throughout human history. Of course it is, for the most part, a practical impossibility to gauge the rise and fall of the moral and ethical landscape of the entirety of “culture” with any sort of accuracy, even when one has a solid standard with which to measure. This is true even, or perhaps especially, when one limits the topic to a single issue within the Christian cannon, such as gay marriage or reproductive rights. This sense of limited history fills a very specific purpose of creating a sense of dire necessity: things have never been so bad as they are now, and present, firm, and unrelenting action is crucial; it is never more important than today. To this end, historical facts, if and when they are related, do not need to be accurate, as long as they serve the purpose of bolstering the perceived truth: that the world is currently worse than it has ever been, and Evangelical Christianity stands as a last bastion against the invading secular, unethical and immoral other.

The secular other, throughout Evangelical rhetoric, is defined by spacial, rather than temporal signifiers. The location of threat is within the community, the faces one sees everyday, even, God forbid, within the family itself; the collapsing borders of “family values” are susceptible, and must be carefully guarded: now, in the present moment. The Evangelical surety of eventual release from the temporally static struggle through the future rapture event creates a percep-

tion of the secular other defined by a permanent state of static collapse, in direct conflict with the narratives of progress that have, perhaps somewhat optimistically, become the rhetorical milieu of a progressive, intellectual class. Rather than viewing historical time as a form of advancement, the Evangelical Christian views the world at large undergoing moral and ethical attrition, slowly becoming worse and more ungodly, until the moment of rapture, where Christ will return to earth to save his followers.

Within the landscape of appropriated facts, questionable associations and historical assumptions; each of which are based on the firm belief in the “rightness” of one’s own agenda, the male figure emerges as the protector of values and identity. Masculinity in American culture, and particularly masculinity that is double-reified by the church structure, must function in a dual manner. It perpetually seeks to both define the borders of what is and what is not able to be identified within either (or both) the religious and political landscape, but it also must seek to perpetually push these borders forward, to convert and to settle the wilderness of the other. In many ways, with the defined settling of America’s borders has made the cowboy, the settler, and the gold miner obsolete as actualities, and these same tasks, on which American masculinity was founded and is defined, and which still have a powerful hold on the American imagination, must be sought in other places. As America’s work force shifted from the rural environment of the farm into the urban factory, this sense of masculinity that relied on the mythos of an open range proved problematic, and it became necessary to collate masculine ideals around other conquerable possibilities within American life. Rather than progressing linearly towards an evolving definition of manhood and masculinity, American and Evangelical culture tie men to a identity which is rooted in the mythologized past, where conquest and siege are the primary indications

of manhood. The historical appropriation of time, which privileges passion over accuracy, combined with the language of warfare and amplified by the ideologies and moral necessity of evangelizing create a modern Evangelical man who must step into the role patriarchy has provided for him, or else be rejected from the community of men who always-already enforce the possible identities available, having both accepted and affirmed these identities themselves.

### **Feminine Sentiment**

In terms of the structures of time inherent to female identity, a number of theorists have tackled this question, most notably, perhaps, de Beauvoir in her seminal book *The Second Sex* and Julia Kristeva in her essay, “Women’s Time.” Rather than merely repeat the findings of these women as they walk through the various manifestations of temporal realities throughout the first, second and third waves of feminism, I hope to address the question of how melodrama positions the question of sentiment, looking at the development of the female character within this moment, in order to address the emphasis on female purity in later chapters. This keenly relates the construction of emotion, just as masculinity, and the resulting focus on futurity, rely on an insistence on passion as a necessary identifying trait. While masculinity is often constructed around the idea of passion, femininity is centered around the idea of sentimentality. First looking at the definition of sentimentality, this section presents one final performative example from Dion Bouciault’s play, *The Poor of New York*. In subsequent chapters, this discussion moves to address the way that sentiment and cyclical formations of time, in concert, construct a performance of identity that creates women—from the moment of childhood on— within the narratives of abjection and objectification, unable to access either rationality, linear time, or the future-focused time of modern Evangelical Christianity, .

The idea of sentimentality rose in popularity during the 19th century, alongside the development of various forms of popular entertainment and increased leisure time for the upper-class woman. Sentiment's reach is long, with its effect felt in literature, popular magazines, advertisements, poetry, drawing and, of course, theatre. Often defined as a reliance on sadness and nostalgia, sentimentality is nuanced beyond this within 19th century cultural performance, as Karen Halttunen points out. Sentimentalism is not just emotional excess or a hypocritical "evading of the harsh social realities of expansive industrial capitalism," but rather, it functions within a social milieu that both responds to and reacts against the social and political changes of the late 19th century (xiv). Sentimentalism is, in fact, more closely linked to the idea of sincerity: the idea that emotions of sadness or nostalgia were genuine expressions of felt reality, not a heightened or exaggerated, and therefore hypocritical, response. Halttunen writes:

The central premise underlying all the sentimental fiction that poured off the American press in the nineteenth century was that private experience was morally superior to public life. Sentimentalists assigned value to private experience in proportion to its emotional intensity, or what they termed *sensibility*. Sensibility was the *summum bonum* of literary sentimentalism . . . Sensibility meant the responsiveness of a delicate heart to the slightest emotional stimulus. . . Although such a finely tuned nervous system could belong to a man as well as a woman, sentimentalists believed that generally women were endowed with superior sensibility. Woman was defined as a creature of the heart, who acted largely from her affections . . . (56-7).

Sentimentalism was not only privileged over the “public life” of the cities and urban environments of the burgeoning industrial age, but it was also working in concert with scientific inquiry to construct a formation of emotional response uniquely tied to ideas of femininity.

Not only were popular fiction, advertisements aimed at middle- to upper-class women and melodramatic theatre all colluding to board the sentimentalist bandwagon, but, just as with racial relations in this era, science was straining to provide empirical evidence that things really should be the way that they were. Stephanie Shields, in her essay on how psychology constructs gender difference in the late 19th century, walks through two key developments in psychology during this time: “concern with mind-body relations and evolutionary theory” (93). These two advances served to challenge the prior notion that women were merely “wrong men,” both sexually and physiologically. As Shields writes, “over the course of the 19th century there came to be compelling political needs to redefining males and females as biologically distinct sexes to replace the earlier construal of female as deficient or lesser male” (96). Evolution and mind-body relations presented the idea that both genders were separate entities, which led to the idea of complementarity; simply put, men and women were designated for roles that suited them best: physically, mentally, sexually, biologically and also emotionally. Men were passionate, leading to action, and women were sentimental, registering sadness and nostalgia on a national scale, uniquely emotional as a condition of their womanhood. Shields writes:

Reason and emotion were believed to be expressed differently for each sex because of underlying “natural” differences. Consistent with the complementarity framework, the strengths of one sex compensated for the weaknesses of the other, with both ostensibly forming a perfect whole. Female/feminine reasoning capabil-



ities were described as intuitive, practical, concerned with specifics, and thus well suited to domesticity and nurturance. Male/masculine reason, in contrast, was more likely to be described in terms of a capacity for objectivity and abstraction, thus better suiting men for broader projects in which either creative thought or impartiality was needed. . . . In its feminine form, emotion was portrayed as a somewhat unstable sensitivity of feelings towards oneself and others. Masculine emotion, in contrast, was described as a passionate force evident in the drive to achieve, to create, and to dominate. (97).

Sentiment, therefore, became a key indication of “proper” womanhood, confined within the domestic sphere because of her unstable emotions.

Not only was the woman of the 19th century assigned the cultural form of sentimental reasoning, she was also, because of this, removed from participation in the future-focused structures of time that were heralded as progressive and historical. It was, as Louise Burchill points out via de Beauvoir, “‘woman’s misfortune’ to be biologically destined for the ‘repetition of Life’ within a continuous and cyclical time while ‘man’s project’ consists in ‘not repeating himself in time but in reigning over the instant and forging the future’” (82). Women, because of the biological functions of childbearing and birth, are relegated to cyclical formations of time which are entirely physical and emotional, rather than rational or progressive; “to women, the time that cyclically returns to its source or infinitely distends and envelops, thwarting mastery in the same movement by which it ‘inexorably overwhelms the subject.’” (84). This is a moment which is evident throughout numerous melodramas of the era, including both *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Black Crook*, both of which present the image of the woman as relegated to her sexual or emo-

tionally supportive role. Dame Winkle is criticized only when she steps outside of her appropriately complimentary space, and Rip's daughter is lauded through her girlishness and her eventual role as a wife. In *The Black Crook*, the women find themselves perpetually contained within the fantasy of the male viewership, despite the economic reforms occurring outside of the theatrical space. This trap of cyclical time, while nuanced by Kristeva through her reading of the "monumental time," still ever returning to the biological and emotional functioning of the woman's body, reduces her to a temporality of confinement, in the same way that sentiment was a means of constructing women within the domestic sphere.

This dichotomy of emotional and temporal gendering is clearly evident in the 19th century, however, while providing a definition of the power and effect that sentiment held not only on the perception and possibility of emotion and time, it is important to also take into account the first wave of feminist thought that was developing among the suffragettes and social reformers of the time. This discussion of sentiment as both a cultural movement and a means of performing gender, when placed alongside the discussion of how temporality was perceived and maintained, demonstrates the powerful forces maintaining the constructs of gender. However, one must also take into account this first wave, most notably the suffragists who fought for women's rights in the wake of the Civil War, and who, during this time, were seeking to confront both the perceptions of sentiment as a lesser mode of discourse and the temporality within which they were confined. Julia Kristeva directs attention to this first wave of feminism, which she says:

aspired to gain a place in the linear time as the time of project and history. In this sense, the movement, while immediately universalist, is also deemed rooted in the sociopolitical life of nations. The political demands of women; the struggles for

equal pay for equal work, for taking power in social institutions on an equal footing with men; the rejection, if necessary, of the attributes traditionally considered feminine of maternal insofar as they are deemed incompatible with insertion in that history— all are part of the *logic of identification* with certain values; not with the ideological (these are combated, rightly so, as reactionary) but, rather, with the logical and ontological values of a rationally dominant in the nation-state. (19)

This desire for inclusion with what is considered a “masculine” formation of time: linear, historical, evolutionary temporality, places women, as Kristeva aptly points out, within a desire for identification with temporalities that have been constructed and formulated to exclude them, rather than challenging the temporality itself. While this has, throughout history, enacted a number of changes and challenges to the patriarchal mode, it is still lacking, and the second and third waves of feminist thought have sought to reconfigure this reliance on masculine temporality, focusing instead on what Kristeva calls, “monumental time.” This desire for participation in the linear temporality in the 19th century manifested itself with a strong push towards social reforms such as the right to vote and prohibition, which women spearheaded with great acumen. Women sought to participate in the traditionally male realms of the public sphere, creating progressive change with an eye towards future improvements.

These reforms point as well to the disruption of sentimentality as the lesser emotional form. Because women were not simply content with the domestic sphere of sentimental confinement within the post-war milieu, the sentimental forms assigned to them also transferred into the public sphere, alongside their desires for provoking social developments on the streets and in

the assembly halls. Sentimentality, therefore, was not simply confined within the parlors of the middle and upper class, but it slowly transformed into a tool for social reform, alongside the women who championed the possibilities for feminine participation within masculine time. Because of this, there is a transference between the domestic sphere and the public, which is made apparent in the melodramatic form, which relies heavily on the idea of sentiment in order to convey and construct its drive towards social reform.

There are numerous examples of this, most notably the play *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which used the emotions of the audience members to promote the anti-slavery cause, or *The Octoroon*, wherein the Northern audience could easily sympathize with the nearly-white Zoe, sold into slavery by dastardly villains. But many lesser-known and studied plays also capitalized on the power of sentiment in the public sphere; including Boucicault's play *The Poor of New York*. In the play, the unrepentant banker Bloodgood steals the fortune of a hapless sea captain who dies of a heart attack while attempting to recover his money. Twenty years later, the sea captain's family, including his wife, son and daughter are living in extreme poverty, and rely on the aid of good-hearted neighbors for food and shelter. The daughter, Lucy, is destined to be with Mark Livingstone, a recently impoverished upper-class man, but in order pay of both his and Lucy's debts, Livingstone has promised to marry Alida, Bloodgood's daughter. Eventually, the truth of Bloodgood's theft comes out, and the fortunes of the sea captain's family are restored, Lucy and Livingstone are married and Alida and Bloodgood are vanquished into infamy, in true melodramatic fashion.

Sentiment seeps around the edges of this play, with all of the characteristic sighs, moans, tears, desperation and young ladies in dire straights. Lucy is certainly the tragic heroine, standing

at the liminal intersection of daughter and wife, and we are given ample images of her fall into poverty and sadness, instigated, as Meenie's suffering was, by the loss of her father. She is long-suffering in both her position as a seamstress and in her love for Livingstone, and even, at one point, attempts suicide, in order that her brother and mother have one less mouth with which to concern themselves. Unlike Meenie, however, Lucy is provided with another masculine provider in her father's death, but even he does not escape the pull of sentiment brought about by poverty. Her brother, Paul, feels the full responsibility for his family's poverty, and his inability to account for his sister and mother cause him to feel burdened both by the poverty itself and his own incompetence to provide. His speech, at the height of his desperation, is clearly activated by the audience's expectation for sentiment:

My limbs are powerless. How long have I slept here? —another day has passed—  
I have crept around the hotels—the wharves— I have begged for work— but they  
have laughed at my poor thin form— the remnant of better days hung in tatters  
about me— and I was thrust from the door, by stronger wretches than I. Today I  
applied to get employment as a waiter in a hotel— but no, I looked too miserable.  
Oh, my mother! my poor mother! my dear sister! were it not for you, I would lie  
down here and die where I was born, in the streets of New York. (46)

The woeful state of Paul and Lucy is set against the machinations of the Bloodgoods, whose very name, in good melodramatic fashion, indicates a sense of well-birthered superiority the American audience would have resented. The theft of the money, and then the knowledge of the poverty of Lucy, Paul, and their mother, compiled with Alida's snobby desire to manipulate Livingstone into marriage though the promise of delivering him from his debts, all position the Bloodgoods as the

unrepentant villains of the tale. The audience for this particular melodrama, as with nearly all others, was clearly instructed who to feel emotion towards and with, set against feelings of horror of disgust at the lack of humanity or empathy on the part of the villain.

However, the sentiment in the play is not merely to cause the audience to feel for poor Lucy and beleaguered Paul. Rather it directs them towards a specific and necessary social change; throughout the play, the audience is made to empathize with the poor characters, picturing how they became poor through no fault of their own. The goal of the play is to develop within the audience an increased empathy not only towards Lucy and Paul, but rather towards the poor as a class. This empathy is certainly not only the only intended outcome, as the play goes one step further, pushing the audience to use the sentiment they felt during the play to enact real social change. At the end of the play, this becomes blatantly obvious. Paul addresses the audience: “Is this true? Have the sufferings we have depicted in this mimic scene, touched your hearts, and caused a tear of sympathy to fill your eyes? If so, extend to us your hands.” His mother then takes up the call, “No, not to us— but when you leave this place, as you return to your homes, should you see some poor creatures, extend your hands to them, and the blessings that will follow you on your way will be the most grateful tribute you can pay to the poor of New York” (68). Explicitly cajoling the audience to produce action points towards the way that sentiment during this era was not only a woman’s impulse, nor was it entirely confined within the domestic realm, but rather, we see the ways in which its employment and development were used to evoke social, and even political, change during this time.

While one can clearly see the role that sentiment plays in enacting social change beyond the 19th century parlor, this does not mean that it was necessarily an un-nuanced means of em-

powerment. While portraying and demonstrating women who tended to be overly emotional in the performance itself, and relying on the audience to react to performances within a gendered construction, the ideas of women as sentimental beings was increasingly self-fulfilling. The stage of this era was full of pitiful women positioned to induce maximum empathy from a sentimental audience: Lucy, her mother, Meenie, Amina. While sentiment could be used as a tool, allowing women to participate in the social reforms of the era, it still served to construct necessarily pre-determined gender relations to both emotion and time. In this way, women's bodies are temporally created within structures of confinement; this is something evident throughout the 19th century's construction of emotion, but which is not entirely contained within the historical past.

Just as the overly future-focused, hyper-militarized language which saturates the performance of masculinity in the 19th century is reflected in the rhetoric of the Evangelical church, the perception of women as overly sentimental is also held as a means of cultural maintenance of gender dichotomies. Shields states in the conclusion to her essay on emotion in the 19th century, "Emotions associated with paternalism, such as love and sympathy, can be effective means of convincing others to oblige, and may be even more effective than coercion. . . . Through the use of coercive emotions, the dominant group can exert social control by maintaining close, seemingly positive relations with subordinates" (107). Through selling the idea of complementarianism within Evangelical culture, paying lip service to the idea that both genders are "separate but equal," while confining women within the emotional landscape of sentimentality and the temporality of cycles, the Evangelical church builds a gender divide which ultimately returns to the regulation of both borders and identities as a critical component. This idea will be investigated

further in the following chapters, which address the role of the woman as wife and as mother, both within a 19th century context and the contemporary Evangelical church.

This relationship between Evangelicals, the focus on futurity within a historical understanding, and the mythopoetic landscape of gendered emotional signifiers create a powerful reification of not only normalized, patriarchal gender relations, but also a temporal structure that promotes and produces gender identity. An understanding of the way in which the Evangelical church experiences temporality can illuminate the logic behind the mainstream Evangelical beliefs and seemingly regressive gender performances. Evangelical Christianity, both historically and currently, produces a performance of time which both denies a chronological viewpoint, appropriating historical understanding in order to maintain a sense of vital diligence, but which also promotes an understanding of time which denigrates one's affective sense of the present in favor of a focus on future events. Moving forward in this investigation, it is increasingly clear that this performative historiography, when juxtaposed alongside the Evangelical insistence on defined gender roles through the evoking of sentiment and passion for females and males, respectively, produces a fundamental insistence on purity: first, sexual purity of the body within the framework of delayed or denied sexual activity, and secondly, institutional purity of the church that insists on distinction from the corrupting present influence of modern culture until the future moment of redemption. From the 19th century's revival culture to modern Evangelical worship services, the relation between time and gender identity structures a powerful affirmation of a culture based on performative insistence on purity as a moral and social good. In order to investigate this further, the following chapter looks at the role of marriage in the life of the female, first



as it is understood within the melodramatic form, and then, as it is manifested in the long history of Evangelical time.

## CHAPTER TWO: MARRIAGE

### The Melodramatic Wife and the Maintaining of Purity

As the girl begins her transition away from her girlhood, one moment stands out in the cultural imagination as an indicator of her movement towards adulthood: the transition into marriage, when the girl becomes a wife, shifting her role away from the temporary, liminal space of childhood into an increasingly stable position under the headship of her husband. In many ways, this transition can be a symbolic transaction between the father and the husband, wherein the woman's agency is transferred from one male figure to another. This understanding of marriage is frequently seen within 19th century texts, which often played out male fantasies of control within the changing social landscape; Minnie, Amina, and even Lucy are seen as safe within the realm of marriage, as it creates a place for them, as women with absent fathers, within the patriarchal landscape. In this chapter, the moment of marriage and woman's role as wife is examined more carefully, first within the 19th century context, and then through an investigation of the contemporary phenomenon of the purity ball, where young girls are prepared for their role as a wife within the Evangelical context. I investigate the role of marriage within two plays from the late 19th century: *The Octoroon*, and *Divorce*, both of which establish heteronormative, racially-homogenous marriage as an ideal, and then point towards the implications for both society and individuals when this ideal is not upheld appropriately.

Dion Bouciault's play *The Octoroon*, and Augustin Daly's play *Divorce*, produced in 1859 and 1871 respectively, both express the sense of anxiety surrounding marriage in early America. Both plays present an idealized version of marriage, but then confound it with a disrupt-

tion: in *The Octoroon*, the audience is left to question to whom, exactly, is marriage available within the larger bounds of society, and within *Divorce*, the audience can see the repercussions of not following the prescribed roles of societal control within the marriage relationship. The idea of social responsibility is deeply intertwined with the characters' own desires for happiness and agency, but these two examples point towards the trouble that arises when the two impulses—social responsibility and the desire for agency—are conflicting. This conflict, as we see in *The Octoroon*, can be formulated around the perception and performance of identity, wherein one's identity is foreclosed from the possibility of marriage or personal happiness, or, as in *Divorce*, when too much desire for personal happiness confounds the socially responsible act of marriage. These two opposing forces—too much social pressure or too much desire for personal happiness, portrayed within the context of marriage—allow for these two plays to be read in tangent. Through both of these plays, the institution of marriage is unquestionably held as a stable ideal, and the characters must seek to change their identity in order to uphold this ideal, to varying results.

This structure of marriage is not immune to the same forms of exclusion and control that define purity culture within the Evangelical church, with social structures presenting the appropriate modes of moving into, and within, a marriage. As we see in *The Octoroon*, marriage is not a possibility for all bodies, particularly those who cannot engage in the appropriate forms of whiteness. In the play *Divorce*, the stability of marriage as a construct comes under question, demonstrating the ways in which marriage, as a heteronormative ideal, requires the performance of very specific and regulated gender norms. Moving through these two examples, an investigation of purity balls within the United States addresses the way in which young women are al-

ways-already constructed within the possibility of heteronormative marriage, even before the event has occurred. Looking at these two plays, as well as the performance of purity balls in the United States, presents an investigation of the ways in which the control of the bodies of the women in these examples tends to mirror the stability of the Evangelical identity within time, particularly when seen in context of the girl's transition into adulthood.

In this chapter, it is also necessary to look at some of the ways the development of emotion and temporality, as were discussed in the prior chapter, are developed into larger structures of society which operate on the basis of exclusion and control, creating the ultimate insistence on purity. In looking at the structures of control as a condition of patriarchy, it becomes clear that, within the United States, there is a particular anxiety around the body of the other, unique to the development and concerns of a nation founded on the perpetual impulse towards Manifest Destiny and the desired erasure of the Native American, black, and immigrant body. Looking at these two plays, the control of emotional and temporal realities translates into control of physical bodies through various means: most obviously, the capitalist structures that seek to transition the abject other into a status as fungible object, removing the availability of agency, but also, the control of gender within the idealized performance of marriage. After looking at these plays, I transition to look at modern manifestations of the same impulse present in Evangelical culture, including the purity ball and the desire of control of the physical body based on the creation of the girl as a future married woman. Tracing the use of emotion and the control of bodies from the 19th century revival movement into the modern purity movement in the Evangelical church, the direct correlation between the desire for purity, both of the body and of the nation, is made obvious. Each of these examples, the two plays and the modern cultural performances in Evangelical cul-

ture, present a picture of how American identity is structured around the creation and control of purity based on emotional structures and temporal relegation.

### **Marriage in the 19th Century**

In the late 19th century, marriage was a often regulated and controlled by one's local community, much more so than by the national government, which was far more concerned with the expansionist spread of its borders than the regulation of citizens' personal, intimate lives (Cott 24). Marriage throughout the United States was generally understood to be a monogamous relationship between a man and a woman. John Adams presented monogamy as a particularly American trait, especially when contrasted with the often more sexually promiscuous societies of France and England during the founding the nation. He wrote that:

the foundations for national Morality must be laid in private Families. In vain are Schools, Accademics [sic] and universities instituted, if loose Principles and licentious habits are impressed upon Children in their earliest years... How is it possible that Children can have any just Sense of the sacred Obligations of Morality or Religion if, from their earliest Infancy, they learn that their Mothers life in habitual Infidelity to their fathers, and their fathers in as constant Infidelity to their Mothers.” (21)

This insistence on monogamy provided increased stability for the fledgling nation, who could now rely on the stability of the nuclear family as a building block of the perceived moral exceptionalism of the United States.

Early in the United States, marriage was often agreed upon within a community, primarily under a Common Law understanding, as there was little formal procedure or etiquette for reg-

istered recognition. Throughout the late 19th century, this Common Law understanding still continued in various locations, but marriage became increasingly legitimized within the state, primarily due to the concern over illegitimate children falling into state care or the lack of ability to determine appropriate inheritance and property rights, particularly as the United States was establishing land ownership as a significant indication of national identity (Friedman 655). As

Nancy Cott writes in her excellent history of “Marriage and the Nation”:

the inconsistent record-keeping in the nineteenth century meant that circumstantial evidence oftentimes had to be used to prove solemnize marriages also. The *maxim semper praesumitur pro matrimonio* (the assumption is always in favor of matrimony) directed and summed up the judges’ thinking. In line with the principle that anyone accused should be presumed innocent of a crime unless proven guilty, a couple living together was presumed to be innocent of immorality unless proved otherwise. (39)

However, this *laissez-faire* attitude towards the marriage bond did not translate into the acceptance of marriages which fell outside of the heteronormative, racially-homogenous standard. Interracial marriages were nullified in 41 states following the end of the Civil War, and heavy fines or jail time were levied against those who sought out an interracial marriage during this era (43). Divorce was often allowed, first because marriage was not a legitimized institution, and therefore could easily be dissolved as the interested parties saw fit. Later, as marriage became an increasing concern of law and policy makers, divorce was permitted under the grounds that either the husband or the wife was not upholding his or her end of the marriage commitment.

In terms of divorce during the latter half of the 19th century, fledgling laws were being put into place which regulated “the grounds” under which divorce was legal and legislated. Lawrence Friedman points towards the trouble with legislating divorce, “One was a demand that the law lend moral and physical force to the sanctity and stability of marriage. The other was a demand that the law permit people to choose and change their legal relations” (653). Therefore, states included various reasons for a justified divorce, including adultery, desertion, “fraud, impotence, conviction of a felony, or habitual drunkenness,” “extreme cruelty,” “neglect or refusal” or, in the case of Massachusetts, “any other gross misbehavior and wickedness” (653-4). In this way, states set various standards for what constituted appropriate grounds for divorce, still allowing for the sanctity of a monogamous marriage relationship. In the play *Divorce*, the lawyer Jitt is greatly concerned with the legal grounds for divorce, while his client is merely concerned with her own dissatisfaction in the marriage. He questions her:

Jitt: What’s your ground?

Lu: What’s my ground?

Jitt: Yes—your legal grounds. . . . He goes out— you don’t know where?

Lu: No, he doesn’t. . . .

Jitt: Then it is a case of cruelty.

Lu: Yes.

Jitt: Inhuman conduct. Unsafe and dangerous to live with him; mere separation.

Revised Statutes—Part Second, Chapter 8, Article 4. And nothing else? (35)

The play goes on to discuss the various grounds which are available to her which would allow for the legalization of her divorce, and eventually they decide that the husband must in fact hit

her— or at the very least, verbally abuse her— in order for the divorce to be upheld by the courts. Later, he says that he would “undertake to get you a cast iron divorce for the faintest tap on the cheek” (46). Portraying this moment onstage would have been a novel moment for the audience, as these kinds of legislations for divorce were only just coming into existence, and the legislated possibility of divorce as a theatrical trope would be a portrayal of a contemporary political issue. No longer was divorce allowed or accepted solely by one’s local community, but rather it was transitioning, as marriage was, into the state-level legislated arena.

Marriage in the 19th century was an institution that demonstrated the stability of the nation as a whole on a micro-familial level. Its regulation, whether on the national, state, or community level, reflected the desires of the nation to present a moral landscape which differentiated itself from European society. Marriage regulation in the United States also reflected the desire to normalize marriage as a heterosexual, racially-homogenous act, one that demonstrated the value placed on gender roles and racial purity in the development of the United States. In investigating the performative examples of marriage during this era, it becomes clear that the idea of marriage as a foundational building block for the nation was affirmed and strengthened not only by the legislative regulations that were developing during this time, but also by the dominant narratives present in the American imagination.

### ***The Octoroon***

Dion Boucicault’s play, *The Octoroon*, is one of the most famous examples of 19th century melodrama. The play opened at Winter Garden Theatre in New York City on December 6th, 1859. Boucicault himself, as well as his wife Agnes, performed in the play. Boucicault first



played the character of Wahnotee, but left the production when he was denied a raise. The play was heralded by the *New York Times* as “the great dramatic sensation of the season” saying,

Everybody talks about the "Octoroon," wonders about the "Octoroon," goes to see the "Octoroon;" and the "Octoroon" thus becomes, in point of fact, the work of the public mind. We have already uttered our critical verdict upon the drama as a drama — the work of one man. Judged in that light, we own ourselves still unable to see what possible reason or common sense there can be in regarding it as formidable political engine. It seemed and seems to us to be merely a cleverly-constructed, perfectly impartial, not to say non-committal, picture of life as it is in Louisiana. (“The Octoroon”)

The Times’ review seems intent on disassociating the play from its political implications, calling attention to the various representations in the play, stating that “its negroes are negroes, and nothing more,” and “its Southerners are Southerners, and nothing more” (“The Octoroon”). The review points repeatedly to the ambiguity of the play, particularly the play’s inability or lack of desire to draw a sure position on the question of slavery. Joseph Jefferson, of *Rip Van Winkle* fame, write in his *Autobiography*, “The dialogue and the characters made one feel for the South, but the action proclaimed against slavery, calling loudly for its abolition” (Thomson 8). This ambiguity points towards Boucicault’s mastery of the melodramatic form: the ability to pull upon the sentimental aspirations of the audience, allowing them to draw their own moral judgments based on their emotional attachments to the characters, without overtly moralizing in the script of the production. The Times article nearly mocks the excessive use of sentiment in the play in gendered language, stating, “Ladies go home from the play so absorbed in speculation on its moral and

meaning as to forget little hoards of banknotes which they had stowed away for safe-keeping behind the chimney-back, and only wake from their political dreams next day to find their bills all converted into very unmetaphorical dust and ashes” (“The Octoroon”). The avoidance of direct moralizing in the play allowed the sentimental affect to draw the audience in, creating a play which was tremendously successful in New York City, and subsequent tours overseas.

In *The Octoroon*, blood is a primary concern. This focus on blood immediately calls attention to the idea of purity: blood is structured as something that must be kept pure, both medically and symbolically. It is easily contaminated, but it also is a contaminant itself. It presents an idea of masculinity through the violence that causes it to be spilled, and it is simultaneously a symbol of both womanhood and virginity, as well as racial purity and the identification with the possibility of citizenship through genetic and racial composition. In looking at the ways in which blood is figured within the *Octoroon*, the idea of purity congeals into a uniquely American insistence towards the purity of the body, the denial of rights to the black and immigrant bodies, and the sexual objectification of women. In this play, the representation of blood is both a symbolic necessity and an actual concern relating to the possibility of reproduction and the use of violence. This emphasis on blood reconstructs sentimentality, reproductive practice, and violence under capitalistic rather than sovereign power, simultaneously capitalizing on the theatricality of plays such as *The Octoroon*, while condemning the theatrical impulse towards exaggeration.

The play revolves around the selling of a large plantation estate after the owner’s death, in order to pay off the debt he owes. The slaves of the plantation are sold as well, including the octoroon woman, Zoe, who is the daughter of the deceased owner. His plan to free her after his death is subverted by the malicious M’closky, who desires Zoe sexually and seeks to purchase

her in order to fulfill his rape fantasies. Zoe, however, has fallen in love with George Peyton, the hapless nephew of Mrs. Peyton, the plantation owner; he has recently arrived at the estate after traveling in Europe. Because of her status as an octoroon, or one-eighth black, Zoe and Peyton cannot marry, and his own love for her leads him to proclaim that he would rather see her dead than a slave to M'closky. She overhears this, and steals poison from another slave, killing herself despite a last-minute reveal which saves the plantation and condemns M'closky as a murderer. Blood marks the play, seen in actuality during the violent death of Paul, the slave whom M'closky kills in order to ensure the sale of the plantation, as well as in its symbolic iteration through the question of subjecthood as it arises in the play; throughout *The Octoroon*, blood determines the status of one's humanity, and even "one drop in eight" relegates Zoe to an existence as non-human within the libidinal economy established by M'closky and the milieu of American slave states during this era.

In the play, gender and gendered relationships play an important role, but racial politics in the United States take precedent. The question of who has a right to live is not merely a matter of actual life and death; it is also a question of the right to an existence as a true subject, an actual person within the boundaries of society. One certainly sees the effect of privilege on the various characters of the play, and the white, heterosexual, American-born males dominate the choices of control over the non-white and female characters in the production, despite the subversive qualities of this production being produced in New York during the thick of the Southern succession during the beginning phases of the Civil War. The play circulates around the themes of violence and sentimentality, both of which provide possibilities for and critiques of the role of patriarchal and racial power in early American drama.

*The Octoroon* is startlingly violent. At one point, the villain M'closky beats a slave boy, Paul, to death with a tomahawk stolen from Wahnotee, a Native American character whose sole role in the production appears to be scapegoat for the racial ignorance that the author seems to desire removed from the bodies of the slaves. In the final act of the American version of the play, M'closky burns down a steamer ship full of slaves who have just been sold from the debt-burdened plantation, only minutes before Zoe fatally poisons herself in desperation. The violence includes a near-lynching of first Wahnotee and then M'closky, and a full scene depicting a slave auction, in which many of the slave families are separated between various buyers. In addition to this, a dark threat of sexual violence permeates the play, and the understated fact that M'closky seeks to purchase Zoe in order to make her his unwilling sexual partner. Yet, throughout all of this, the play itself remains far from the grotesque bloodbath of despair that the sum of its parts would promise, the melodramatic tone and over-the-top language settling it comfortably within the genre of sentimental melodrama.

The robust emphasis on the love relationships between the various characters wins over the audience's sympathy, particularly for the titular character, Zoe, who comes off as humble and demure, the hapless victim to an unfortunate fate. She is condemned by the "one drop in eight" of her blood which dooms her to the whims of capitalism and patriarchal societal constructs, despite her desire to free herself from her own blood in order that her body may be as free as her heart (Boucicault 176). Her romantic attraction to George Peyton and the theatrical history of this play present an obvious example of structural power relations within the United States of America. In the performances at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York City, Zoe dies in the final moments of the play, choosing to take a poison rather than participate in the libidinal economy of

slave ownership. She dies on a sofa, with her professed lover George Peyton nearby, foreclosed from the possibility of fulfilling her romantic desires in marriage. However, in the European edition of the play, Zoe's life is spared, and she is happily reunited with George. They celebrate their marriage and the final tableau of death transforms into a joyful tableau of celebration. This draws distinct attention to the control of bodies in the Civil War era United States, even in the North, which refused the possibility of interracial marriage, condemning the character Zoe to an ignominious end at her own hand.

It is clear that the moment of Zoe's suicide would elicit a great deal of sentiment from the American audience, who would have come to see the personhood of Zoe as they track her romantic relationship and struggle for freedom. She, unlike the other slave characters in the play who are condemned as other by both their appearance and their speech, benefits from a physical appearance which is entirely passable as white. This appearance is not merely her skin color however: her diction is eloquent and poetic, her clothing rivals that of the plantation owner's legitimate daughter. However, at the moment when George seeks to confess his love to her, she stops him, saying:

George, do you see the hand you hold? Look at those fingers; do you see the nails are a blueish tinge? ... Look in my eyes, is not the same color in the white? ...

Could you see the roots of my hair you would see the same dark, fatal mark. Do you know what it is? That is the ineffaceable curse of Cain. Of the blood that feeds my heart, one from in eight is black-- bright red as the rest may be, that one drop poisons all the flood; those seven bright drops give me love like yours-- hope like yours-- ambition like yours-- life hung with passions like dew-drops on morn-

ing flowers; but the one black drop give me despair, for I am an unclean thing. . . .

(178)

This insistence on the minutiae of racial imagining both comforts and unsettles: the signifiers are so tiny that George, deep in the throes of love, cannot see them, yet Zoe can point them out with biological certainty. The practice of eugenics was so comfortably understood in this era that imagined signifiers such as blue fingernails or a blueish tint in the whites of the eyes could betray one's standing as less than human, subject to social death and the ignoble practices of pure capitalism within the slave society. The audience of this moment could rest assured that such signifiers existed, that Zoe was racially other. However, they could also be persuaded by their own identification with her plight that she too, like they, was fully capable of participating in civil society as fully person, beyond the undetectable signifiers of her social death. In this way, one can quite clearly see how sentiment became a favorite tool of the American theatre, particularly for the social movements concerned with eliding the normative structures of power and effecting social change by reassigning the boundary lines of social inclusion, be it through abolitionist plays, suffrage dramas, or even lectures, sermons or political speeches. If the orator or actor could make the audience feel concern for, empathy towards or identification with a particular character, then he or she is that much nearer to relocating the borders of normalized society to include that person. However, even while the audience may have felt a sense of empathy or concern for Zoe's plight, her insistence on the "blueish tinge" on her body only reaffirms the determination of nineteenth-century eugenics, reconstructing her personhood as an emotional choice by the audience, not a "scientific" one. Just as she necessarily died at the end of the play in order to prevent the irredeemable performative act of an interracial marriage, her insistence on her own

lack of humanity relegates her position to object, subjected to the control of George Peyton, M'closky, her dead father, and the social system that was too late to save her from her preventative suicide. In this way, the eventual liberatory affects of this production were conflated at best, and reliance on pure sentiment creates a subversive idea which is centered around the individualized responses of members of the public.

Since the play presents only a calloused view of violence, no matter who it is directed towards (Zoe, Wahnotee, M'closky) and the sentimental affect felt towards Zoe is tempered by a profound anxiety about the racial characteristics of the heroine, this play presents an ambiguity towards the manifestations of aggression exhibited on the bodies of female characters, non-white characters, and female, non-white characters. The narratives of race and gender in the play are elided together to illustrate the profound control over bodies during this era in United States history. *The Octoroon* serves to affirm many of the social structures and systems of control which were set in place in the early United States, even while providing moments of subversion, shown in Zoe's agency in professing her love to George. Even though these moments provide the dramatic conflict and sentimentality necessary to bolster the attendance of a nineteenth-century playhouse, the play itself, in its actual performance, particularly in the American version, functions to affirm the marriage relationship as an act available only to white citizens. While Boucicault may have intended the play to inhabit a space of ambiguity that would allow the audiences to inscribe their own moral standards to the play, the dominant narrative of marriage as a restricted act was both affirmed and portrayed by the characters. While Boucicault used sentimental affect to develop Zoe's sense of personhood and the audience's emotional involvement with the play, the play's unexamined participation with the libidinal economy of the commodification of

the female body and the involvement in the capitalist structure of theatrical production during this era, fails to invoke participation outside of hegemonic, patriarchal structures, even within the era during which it was performed.

Indeed, Boucicault himself rejected the idea that Zoe should be permitted a marriage to George, even after the British audiences clamored for a change in the play. Peter Thompson writes in his introduction to Boucicault's plays, "Self-interest shading into sharp practice was not outlawed by Boucicault's flexible morality. On the subject of *The Octoroon*, though, he remained unusually firm. When the London public objected to Zoe's dying, he resisted the demand for a rewriting of the last act for as long as he dared" (9). The portrayal of Zoe's marriage, which would have tempered the critique of the unimaginable aspect of interracial marriage, was not, according to Boucicault, an acceptable possibility, given the situation. While the argument could be made that Boucicault was critiquing, rather than agreeing with, the structures of marriage in place in the United States, the prevalent ambiguity in the play, which allows the audience to inscribe their own morality on the play allows for the institution of marriage to remain unexamined in the eyes of the audience. Rather than widen the limited definition of marriage, the play focuses instead on developing emotional attachments to the individual characters, without making wider moral or ethical statements.

In *The Octoroon*, capital also elides itself with the identity of the characters, reconstituting them as, in some instances, purely economic commodities. The repercussions of failed capitalist endeavors haunt the play, and the entire action occurs in the aftermath of the fall of a plantation due to overwhelming debt after the death of the owner. The most obvious example of identity construction through capital is certainly shown in the characters of the slaves at the planta-



tion. In the wake of economic disaster, their bodies are set on the auction block to be sold to the highest bidder, a process performed in the third act of the play. Even though the audience may have bought into the idea that the bodies of the men and women onstage are legitimized into the possibility of personhood, the scene reenacting the gross humiliations of body-as-commodity refuse to separate the identities of the characters from their unwilling and troubled participation in the economic system of the slave-era South. In this way, control is again linked to the idea of capitalist profit; the slaves must be sold in order to recuperate the debt owed on the plantation. Zoe, whom the audience would have been most sympathetic to, given her love for George and her light skin, is sold to M'closky in a moment of melodramatic horror, much to the chagrin of both the characters, M'closky excepted, and the audience. It is significant to note here that the capitalist forms of power in the slave-era South, at least as this play exhibits, stood as structures beyond individual identity, not as modes of discipline, according to Foucault's definition, but rather as modes of security, which rather than being "exercised on the bodies of individuals" is "exercised over a whole population" (Foucault 25). Even though none of the other characters, except for the unquestionably nefarious M'closky, were complicit in the selling of Zoe at the slave auction, the economic and political landscape was such that no other option existed. Falling outside the boundaries of civil society through her "one drop in eight," Zoe is condemned, not by the individuals she encounters, but rather by the structure of society. As such, she goes willingly to auction, hoping to save the estate of her father, whose promised papers of freedom were deemed void by the foreclosure of his property.

The use of sentimentality—the proper execution and use of emotion—which constructs Zoe as a full participant of "civil" society and then stages a scene within which she is sold to a

man who desires her sexually, creates a sense of horror in the audience, tempered by the melodramatic tone of the work itself; the play, as a participant in the libidinal economy of displayed and controlled bodies creates a physical disconnect, wherein the body of character Zoe is elided with the body of the actress whom the audience has paid to see sold on the auction block in the third act. In this sense, the audience is reduced to the position of bystander, eliciting a series of sensations, whether pleasurable or enjoyable, horrified or shocked (or a more complicated mix thereof) from watching the drama of the slave auction unfold before them. In this way, the audience of the original production(s) of *The Octoroon* are implicated in the power enacted against the bodies, not only of the characters, but of the entire population as a mode of security.

*The Octoroon* provides a picture of the understood regulation of marriage in the late 19th century, not necessarily just because of the laws that prevented interracial marriage, but also because of the level of control that the local community exerted on individuals who desired a marital relationship. These two types of control— state/legislative and communal/affective— work together to make sure the individuals uphold the moral obligations that a society has decided upon. In this way, marriage regulation is a subset of the regulation of purity standards created and controlled by similar means. In the play, the Zoe is presented as the pure and innocent girl, who is forced into circumstances beyond her control. She, however, because of her one-eighth blackness, is denied the presumed, eventual outcome of her purity: the marriage relationship. She cannot participate in the futurity inherent in the promise of purity, and therefore, she quite literally has no future. While she is constructed as a daughter in the play through her purity, she can never be constructed as a wife, because her racial characteristics deny the ultimate outcome of purity. She can be pure as a daughter, under the agency of her father, but cannot make the transi-

tion into wife, because of the limits placed on the marital relationship within the performative landscape of the play and the late 19th century in America.

Marriage in the 19th century, therefore, is understood to be a structure that is inherently unavailable to portions of the American population. The pursuit of a white America was enacted through both communal and legislative control, demonstrating the power of the desire for sexual and racial purity within the marriage act. However, even when marriage is supported and upheld by the community and the state, it does not always live up to the idealism surrounding it, even when the participants are well within the normative definition of the purity structures. Within American culture, however, forces collude to quickly maintain the breakdowns of the normative marriage, as societal and legislative control do not end when the marriage begins, but rather function to perpetually surveil the marriage structure. Looking at another performative example in Augustin Daly's play, *Divorce*, we can further assess the role of marriage as the culmination of girlhood and the desired outcome of society as key indication of both the purity and the health of the nation as a whole, despite attempts to subvert it from within its 19th century, normative definition.

### ***Divorce***

Daly's play, *Divorce*, presents a familial picture of the role of marriage in the United States in the late 19th century. As the title proudly proclaims, the play addresses the role of divorce in American society: the first such play to engage with the controversial topic. It was an adaptation of Anthony Trollope's novel, *He Knew He Was Right*, although Daly changed the names of the characters and changed the setting from England to America, making the play into a work he could consider merely influenced by the novel, rather than a staging of it. The play was

very popular with the American population, carefully riding the tension between entertainment and moral messaging against the dissolving of the marital bond. It opened on September 5th, 1871, and played over 200 evenings at Madison Square Theatre in New York, as well as in other locations in the North, setting a record at the time for the number of performances. Daly himself went on from this play to form a company in New York City, which opened in 1879, and then a second company in London in 1893. He enjoyed a great deal of fame as a playwright and theatre manager throughout his long career, presenting plays which appealed to large segments of the American population during this era (Daly).

The play *Divorce* follows several years in the lives of members from a single formerly-prosperous, white family. Two daughters, Fanny and Lu (short for Louise), are married in the first act of the play. In grand melodramatic tradition, the daughters' father is absent, but they are quickly being ushered, under the direct supervision of their mother, to the authority of their husbands. The play opens with the wedding day of the older daughter, Lu. She is getting married to a much older gentleman, De Witt, who adores her, despite her indifference to him. It is a marriage of convenience, and Louise is pushed towards the match by her mother, Mrs Ten Eyck, who is primarily concerned that her daughters are materially provided for. Fanny is to be married to the young and wealthy Alfred Adrianse, who was passionately in love with her two years prior, before her mother denied him marriage due to Fanny's youth. In the first act, he returns from a sea voyage and proclaims he is still pining over Fanny, and she, now 19, agrees to marry him. Both marriages are completed by the young Reverend Harry Duncan, who is poor, but in love with the orphaned niece of Mrs. Ten Eyck, Grace; he hopes to marry her despite his poverty and

her lack of parentage. The two weddings at the top of the play are both performed to audience's amusement, despite the various foreshadowings of trouble to come.

In the second act, set three years later, trouble in the marriages has begun to manifest. Fanny feels restricted in her marriage because her husband Alfred prefers that she stop spending time with the Captain, a poor bachelor who forswears marriage due to his finances, but has the skill of coercing young married women to spend time with him. The Captain has set his sights on Fanny, and she, while entirely faithful to her husband, does not want to restrict her freedoms by following her husband's demands on her time and company. Lu is also feeling restricted in her marriage to De Witt, and he is bewildered by her changing whims. The difference is perpetually blamed on their age difference, as Lu comes across as impetuous and changeable, and De Witt as too old to keep up with her quickly shifting moods. Lu has decided to take steps towards a divorce, and has hired a divorce lawyer named Jitt. He, along with a bumbling detective named Burritt, provide the comic relief through a series of bungled operations in attempt to secure a divorce for Lu. The problem is that she has no legal grounds for a divorce; De Witt is perpetually patient with her, and, despite her attempts to rouse him to anger, he will not strike or hit her, which would grant her reason for the divorce she so longs for. Fanny, on the other hand, is content to stay with Alfred, but the smoldering resentment that is building between them over her interactions with the Captain bode ill for their marriage. Added to that, we discover late in the play that Fanny and Alfred have a small child, a boy of about two years old, whose presence in the play causes frustration between the two parents as they struggle over the child's affection, and eventually, custody.

As the play progresses, tensions between the two couples build, and after De Witt discovers Lu's intentions to divorce him, offers her the divorce uncontested, along with a generous living stipend. After his offer she quickly reverses her feelings towards him, and spends the remainder of the play seeking to prevent the divorce that the lawyer Jitt is determined to make happen. Fanny and Alfred have separated, and Fanny has taken the child to live with her mother. Alfred, however, is not happy with the arrangement, and steals the child back during the night. In true melodramatic fashion, the couple is eventually reconciled, but only after Alfred is sent to an insane asylum, Fanny realizes the error of her ways in her dealings with the Captain, and her mother repents her own meddling in the marriages of her daughters. In a twist at the end, Lu and De Witt discover their divorce has gone through against both of their wills, and they resolve to immediately remarry. In this way, all ends well in the play, even for Grace and the Reverend Harry Duncan, who take advantage of Mrs. Ten Eyck's preoccupation with the marital problems of her daughters and get married at the end of the play, after being duly warned about the dangers of divorce.

The play serves as a lighthearted warning against the dangers of divorce, with the bulk of focus directed towards the proper ways to get married and remain so. Girlhood, as the phase the women in the play are extolled to move away from, provides a constant target, inasmuch as girlhood is presented as vain, frivolous, simple, and focused on the selfish happiness of the child. The two daughters, Lu and Fanny are both, with the assistance of their mother, lead through the transition from girlhood into their roles as wives. In the first act, the Captain questions Fanny's feelings about Alfred, to which Duncan responds, "She wasn't allowed to have any sentiments on the subject, as she was merely a schoolgirl then" (7). Alfred himself denies his future wife

agency by presenting himself first to her mother, and then asking her for Fanny's hand, only seeking out Fanny's opinion on the matter after her mother's insistence. By virtue of her status as girl, Fanny is disallowed agency in the matter, and it is only once Alfred has proved his suitability to hold up his end of the marriage bargain—namely, to provide for his wife's material well-being—is Fanny allowed to convey her pleasure at the match. Fanny is repeatedly chided for her girlish ways as she transitions into marriage, with her mother's insistence that she does not “throw away ... happiness by these girlish coquetries” (17); she herself states that, “we get to big for those things of girlhood, even for its love” (19). In Lu's case, her husband provides the perfect father-substitute, and indeed, is mistaken for her father by Alfred, who asks if De Witt is, in fact, the father of her groom, rather than the groom himself. Lu is called a “sensible girl” for her desire to marry a man of wealth, with “sensibility” being held up as a greater characteristic than happiness: “I don't insist on your being happy, but I expect you to be sensible” (18). This idea pervades the play: that marriage is the moment in a woman's life when she must cast aside the girlishness of youth and act in a manner which is “sensible.” In this way, girlhood becomes the scapegoat, and the young women are pushed to transition away from it throughout the play.

In the second act of the play, the audience sees the difficulties that the two daughters are having with casting aside their happiness in order to fulfill their marital role. Neither of them are able to give up their own desire for happiness, despite their mother's protestations. Their lack of enjoyment in their marriages is again referred to as girlishness, “ungrateful girl,” and “you foolish girl” are used to shame them into proper behavior (48). After the eventual reconciliation of the couples at the end of the play, references to the girlhood of the two daughters have vanished, as they have, through the course of the play, dutifully accepted their roles. In Fanny's case, she

and Alfred have a much more difficult reconciliation than Lu and De Witt do; in the end, it is her child's pleading that brings about Alfred's return, just as it is the search for the child that brings Fanny to confront Alfred after his disappearance. Alfred accuses her at this moment: "I have thought that you would find me in time, because you wanted your child . . . I had no thought of myself. If you come, it is because you have a mother's instinctive love. All women have that, even the worst" (79). Quite literally, her marriage is saved by her role as mother; it is only through her responsibilities and "maternal instinct" that she is able to accept her position as wife, and it is her child who brings her and her husband together in the final moment of the play. This points towards the significance of women's role as mother, establishing this responsibility as almost salvific in its execution. This moment of childbirth in a woman's life will be investigated further in the following chapter, but it is important to note the desire for redemption that each of these phases of a woman's life provide: her marriage will save her from her "unruly" girlhood, and her children will save her from the "dutiful" responsibilities of marriage, making the former phase meaningful in retrospect. In this way, each role enacted by the 19th century woman on-stage points towards the future potential of the next: the girl becoming a wife, becoming a mother.

This play demonstrates the power of marriage as a social construct for these women. In this way, it can be clearly contrasted with the presentation of marriage shown in Boucicault's *Octoroon*. In *The Octoroon*, marriage functions as a process of exclusion, wherein Zoe desires the happiness of marriage, which is denied to her. In *Divorce*, marriage is presented as a given within the social realm the daughters inhabit, and while they are initially desirous of marriage as the fulfillment of their happiness, but that idea is quickly vanquished in favor of the idea of social re-



sponsibility. Through these two plays, one can clearly see the structures of control which regulated marriage: the white, well-born daughters of Daly's world operate under the assumption of eventual marriage, while Zoe is excluded from the possibility of marrying George, because it would necessitate her movement into the social realm he inhabits. The question of happiness in marriage is another facet of the discussion: in each instance, the young woman looking to be married assumes happiness for herself in the marriage relationship, but in the end, social responsibility trumps personal desire, whether or not they achieve the marriage. Zoe states, when George questions why she will not escape with him, that her responsibility is with her family, saying:

And your mother, she who from infancy treated me with such fondness, as who, as you said, has most reason to spurn me, can she forget what I am? Will she gladly see you wedded to the child of her husband's slave? No! she would revolt from it, as all but you would; and if I consented to hear the cries of my heart, if I did not crush out my infant love, what would she say to the poor girl on whom she had bestowed so much? No, no! (197)

This familial responsibility is the same as the two daughters in *Divorce* feel when they eventually return to their husbands, as the pleading of their mother and the pressure from other members of their community. In both cases, while happiness may be a desire for the marriage relationship, it is social responsibility that both prevents the unacceptable marriage of *The Octoroon* and protects the sanctified marriages in *Divorce*. The case for the agency of these characters is slim at best: the eventual outcomes within the plays produce a landscape where the women are clearly

and undeniable fostered towards their eventual ends, both by the regulation of law and their social networks.

In looking at these two plays in tangent, one can clearly see the ways in which marriage in the United States is regulated and controlled, and the way in which women were provided performative examples of following the assigned trajectory of girlhood to marriage. As well, it is clear that the trajectory presented points towards the idea of futurity: that a girl's value lies in her eventual position as wife, and a wife's value lies in the potential for her to bear children. This sense of futurity, in many ways, recalls the masculinized sense of temporality that pervades 19th century thought. Recalling Josiah Strong and the formations of time that point towards the future potential of the United States as an imperialist nation, the bodies of these women tend to approximate the land of the nascent United States in their value being held in their potential fertility. This sense of futurity that is ascribed on both the women of these plays, and the United States as a nation, points towards the powerful affect of unexamined patriarchal structures, wherein one's sense of temporality relegates value, and often even agency, into the hands of a privileged few. Looking forward, this form of control through future-potential is not merely a relic of the 19th century past, but instead has developed into the specific control over a young woman's purity. Purity, in this sense, is strictly equated with a girl's future potential as wife, wherein her eventual value to her husband must remain "unsoiled" by the shame of sexual sin. In the next section, this phenomenon is looked at more closely, in terms of how purity is dealt with within the contemporary Evangelical church in the United States. Starting from the revival culture of the 19th century and tracing the desire for purity to the contemporary era, one can see, again, the long history of the 19th century's performances of gender.

## **Evangelical Purity and Cultural Capital**

The intricate interconnection between social capital, the regulation of societal norms, and the Evangelical culture in the United States is a product of a long insistence on American exceptionalism stemming from the revival culture of the 19th century and the ensuing emphasis on social progress through various movements. The idea of revivalism is a cultural mythology that promotes the possibility of religious experience as a profoundly theatrical and emotional event, playing into the already-established tendency towards masculine passion and feminine sentimentality. From the Businessman's Revival that swept the East Coast in 1857 to the yearly tent meetings popularized in the South and West of the United States as manifestations of the many waves of "Great Awakenings," to traveling revival preachers who went "on the circuit" in order to save souls, revival culture was a national phenomenon in the years prior, during, and after the Civil War. Because of the duration of the concept and the variety of impulses towards revival, revival culture in the United States is a complex and multi-dimensional subject, surely one that cannot be reduced to a single, all-encompassing, monolithic outcome; one must consider not only the breadth of time and space that these revivals covered, but also the personal impact they may have had on individuals who participated in their practice. However, it is significant to note the cultural trends and the zeitgeist of the time, particularly insofar as it relates to the modern day movements in Evangelical Christianity. The movement towards displays of emotion and emotional affect as social and economic capital, the loss of hierarchical church structure in favor of a single charismatic leader, the increasing masculinization of piety, and displays of conversion each play a role throughout the history of Evangelical practice. Just as the revival meeting became a "arguably the first, large-scale, popular entertainments in the United States" (Long 43), the modern

Evangelical worship service relies on similar modes of entertainment to attract and retain participants. Evangelical megachurches, in many ways, are the direct result of revival culture in the United States, exhibiting many of the same characteristics as the tent and prayer meetings which occurred in the late nineteenth century.

The structure of the worship service at a large Evangelical outpost is, aside from the technical innovations of a new century, strikingly similar to the revival tent meeting. Large numbers of people who come to hear a “celebrity” pastor urge them on to a more spiritual existence, aided by the thoughtful hum of a single guitar in order to provoke contemplation or the rising beat of a drum in order to elicit feelings of emotional excitement. Both the revival meeting and the traditional megachurch service attempt the same outcome, using nearly the same methods: the widening of doctrinal positions in order to include the maximum number of possible participants; the use of emotional response, through either music or a passionate message in order to exhort the audience to a more spiritual existence; the celebrity nature of both participants and speakers; and the complex interaction between spirituality and capital, with cultural and economic capital functioning as a means of achieving personal stature within this particular community setting.

There is one major difference between the revival meeting of the past and the current megachurch. This, it seems, is God: simply put, God has “become nicer,” as historian T. M. Luhrmann points out in her book, *When God Talks Back* (Wright). No longer plagued by messages of hellfire and damnation, churchgoers in the modern era can rejoice in a God who cares for their personal best, loves them no matter what, and wants them to be emotionally, spiritually and economically secure, creating a sharp turn from the revival meeting messages of “repent or

burn,” which played on the emotions of guilt and fear. Rather, the modern audience can come together and express that “I am happy God loves us” and “We are happy we love God,” using a stilted emotional language which tends to take these two sentiments as the only possible emotional range of the worshipping Christian (McCracken). While this may seem a complete turn, I would posit that, due to the relationship between worship and capital which was emerging during the revival era, the modern church, particularly in its megachurch formation, was destined for a nicer God who desired not only the spiritual and emotional well-being of churchgoers, but also their economic success, achieved for oneself through the same emotional affect of the past: feelings of ecstasy and happiness, as well as repentance, no longer elicited through fear, but rather through a desire to feel and achieve greater elation. Removing the fear from the modern worship service presents an even more elementary emotional vocabulary to the participants, but allows for worshippers to experience the heightened emotional affect of a singular emotion: elation. Sitting at the intersection of security, eros, sensuality and the energy of the crowd, modern worship services, particularly in megachurch manifestations, have codified the process of emotional rise and fall, artfully directing the energies of the participants. Many churchgoers are well-versed in the desired expressions of emotional affect: hands raised, tears streaming, perhaps even falling to one’s knees or standing, emotional energy taut with expectation and willingness to participate in an altar call, healing, or prayer; this what many participants call “the Holy Spirit.” What Earnest Bormann writes about the revival culture in New York in 1830 rings true today, “The people . . . were given to unusual religious enthusiasms and susceptible to sharing fantasies relating to the perfection of human beings and the attainment of the millennium” (146). Just as the revival participant was encouraged to structure his or her own life in accord with the spiritual zeitgeist of

the time and to enact social change accordingly, the modern Evangelical is urged to align his or her life not only with the spiritual views of the movement, but also the political and social stances of the mainstream Evangelical culture, all achieved through these momentary highs of exhortation during the worship service.

The Evangelical church participates in the idea of affect— passion and sentiment— as a mode of exchange; however, instead of simply structuring the economic exchange as “paying a fee for an affect,” the Evangelical church, as Max Weber and others have pointed out, uses affect itself as a form of social and economic currency, translating religious fervor and emotional engagement with the worship service as a form of capital within the community. Evangelical worship, therefore, functions within the landscape of capital, affect, and religious care of the soul. This, perhaps, leads to a relinquishing of the insistence on the myth of intellectual and mind-based worship as a possibility, calling attention to the ways in which emotional affect directs the relation to the sacred, as well as the relation to the capitalist impulse: not only does one engage in the economy for the emotional affect it provides, but as the revival movement and modern worship prove, affect itself functions, in some cases, as a form of capital. Simply put, it is important to conform to the emotional and affective postures and attitudes of the Evangelical movement, as this, even more so than doctrinal adherence, signifies one as a successful member of the Evangelical community.

This eliding of emotional affect and social capital serves to produce a church that is rarely concerned with factual adherence to doctrine or creed. Evangelical worship and participation is not concerned with facts, but with appearances: a religious tradition passed down from the earliest moments in revival culture, when signifying one’s soul as saved became the proper and ap-

appropriate thing to do. The necessary exhibition of emotion or sentiment is a means of displaying one's agreement with and adherence to the culture of Evangelicalism, and a number of cultural signifiers— including metaphorically-laden speech indicators, modes of performing gender, a certain cultural knowledge of Evangelical “celebrities” or movements, and the displays of personal piety during the worship service— are all ways in which one signifies participation in this culture. The ways in which one learns and produces these signifiers are regulated and mandated by the mainstream Evangelical culture, which relies heavily on the affective structures to provide those who repeat and reaffirm Evangelical culture with feelings of hope, security, peace, progress and happiness. Indeed, the product of this impulse is heavily regulated by capitalism: Evangelical culture is a community that is marked by its conflicted relationship with popular aesthetic culture, both rejecting it as sinful and fallen, but then, for all intents and purposes, imitating it as nearly as possible, sanitizing the “fallen” parts and redeeming the remainder for consumption (Radosh 11). Christian death metal bands, Christian folk groups, Christian breath mints (Testamints©), Christian movies, novels, t-shirts, jewelry, office swag, stuffed animals, beer (or soda) cozies, doormats, school supplies, and etc., not to mention books which will cure and solve myriad problems, increase wealth through the “Prosperity Gospel,” help with weight loss, (*The Daniel Plan: Feed Your Soul, Strengthen Your Spirit, and Renew Your Body*) and confidence (*A Confident Heart: How to Stop Doubting Yourself and Live in the Security of God's Promises*), as well as a *Personal Promise Bible* which will “insert YOUR name in more than 7000 key scriptures” all produce the same feelings on which capitalist culture banks. While producing goods and commodities for purchase, Evangelical culture simultaneously uses these indicators of cultural adherence to maintain and regulate who is or who is not an involved member of the society,

alongside the affirmations of positive feelings produced by an ideological insistence on future security, happiness, and even wealth: both in this life and in the life to come.

More than merely receiving feelings of happiness, peace or security through involvement with Evangelical culture, participants become a critical component of maintaining the culture, particularly because Evangelical culture both relies on and perpetuates the American insistence on individualism; participants in Evangelicalism are particularly proud of the insistence on personal salvation and personal relationship with God, often set in contrast to religious forms such as Catholicism which are maintained through hierarchical structures. This means, in many ways, that the Evangelical church is held together by the force of personalities rather than the hierarchies decided by governing bodies. This is not to say, of course, that the same forms of patriarchal control do not exist in other religious structures: quite obviously churches which rely on hierarchies are just as susceptible, if not more so, to the perpetuation of control structures that devalue women. However, I would like to posit that the particular Evangelical kind of patriarchal control that we see collating around the insistence on individual piety and emotional connection to a culture provides a particularly insidious method of control, which often hides itself alongside the creation of identities; both gendered and American identities elide the fact that American, Evangelical culture is creating and created by patriarchy.

One way that this manifests is through the creation of purity culture. The Evangelical focus on futurity, which presents women in terms of their future potential; the construction of emotional structures that position women as sentimental, with both ties the domestic environment and the reliance on emotional nostalgia to enact social progress; the insistence on female purity, both racial and sexual, as a condition of social involvement; and the formulation of women un-



derneath the control of men, due to the biological “frailties” of reproductive necessity each simultaneously work to enforce a culture which produces the fantasizing of women as either a virgin or a whore. This dichotomizing, familiar throughout American society, is the foundation of purity culture. Identity plays a profound role in this, for several reasons: identity as an Evangelical, as an American, and as a gendered identity each perform an aspect of purity culture, which, when seen in tangent, pose a seemingly inescapable insistence on sexual morality (Valenti 13-4).

As an American, the forgetfulness of a long history and the imperialist, expansionist impulses create a need for maintaining borders and regulating the acceptance of the population; this is seen in the current struggles over immigration rights and border control, but also in the 19th century concerns over Manifest Destiny, the erasure of the Native American body, and the fear of populations other than a narrowly-defined European identity becoming too large. This concern with maintaining a performative patriotic identity is combined, more often than not, with an Evangelical identity which is highly concerned with maintaining the borders of a de-centralized and individualistic religion, one which, while relying on masculine hyper-insistence on the simultaneous goals of evangelizing the non-believer and warning participants against the quite-literal apocalyptic results of falling into “worldliness” or sin, is pushing participants to adhere to very specific cultural forms created and maintained through affective emotional displays. The stakes for this struggle are high: inclusion in, or, alternately, exclusion from the fold of Evangelical salvation is quite literally a battle of life and death, and knowing on which side of the fence you fall is posed as the most important question that can ever be asked. These two identities collide together to perform a hyper-anxiety over the delineating and controlling the processes of inclusion, and when you combine gender, the desire to assert masculinity through regulating the

same insistence on inclusion/exclusion is applied to the sexual behaviors of women: not just women who also ascribe to Evangelical, American identities, but all women, “wrapping misogyny in the gloss of respectability” (Berg 97). In this way, the woman is the metaphorically equated with either the conquerable land or the pagan other: one to be conquered and one to be evangelized and redeemed from sinfulness.

Through this equation with both land and the pagan other, who already stands outside of political inclusion by the majority, women’s bodies are seen as the potentially-fertile object, not imbued with the same sense of political or social agency provided to the masculine gender identity. Because of this objectifying, women are no longer valued as humans, but rather their value lies in their standing as commodity: and for a woman to be valuable within the heteronormative family marriage structure, she must be subjected to the same aggressive maintenance of borders as the United States itself is: recalling Strong, the value of the land also lies in its fertile possibilities. Because of this equation, both men and women are subjected to purity culture, where the sexual lives and behaviors of women are regulated by men, and eventually, by other women and the internal desire to self surveil. One must remember, however, that sexual behavior defies easy categorization and resists the dichotomizing of good/evil that would make it simple to reconstruct women into this same delineation. Simply put, purity culture is when the value of women is located through the strict dichotomy of either sexual activity or lack thereof, despite the vast continuum of possible sexual activity (Valenti 21). The same culture which insists that women, as commodity, are more valued if they are virgins until their wedding, (and subsequent handing-over of responsibility for financial and emotional well-being from the father to the husband), is the culture that insists women constantly live out their own purity through performative means.

If a woman does not repeatedly and insistently signify that she is pure, then her entire moral value is called into question.

Within Evangelical culture, this is particularly evident; as a society which repeatedly rejects examples of women controlling their own sexual narrative, whether in media or personal experience, Evangelical culture defines purity culture in biblical terms, justifying the equation of sexual worth with moral worth through the use of inherent scripture, “because Scripture is utterly clear on gender distinctions in both home and church” and “it is never safe to act contrary to biblical teaching” (Piper x). Women are perpetually called to “biblical womanhood,” which echoes the 19th century emphasis on complementarianism: a woman’s value lies within the domestic sphere, simply because in this way she can best support her husband’s complementary public career, as will be discussed further in the following chapter. In this way, marriage, and eventual motherhood, become the highest aspirations for the Evangelical woman, and are duly celebrated as such within Evangelical culture. In order to achieve marriage, however, we return to the sense of time constructed by Evangelical culture: a future-focused insistence, wherein the personal self remains static within the set belief system.

One outcome of the role purity takes in Evangelical culture is the anxiety over change within the self-contained body, where the threat against purity could come from inside the body itself: the subverting, guilty desire for sexual intercourse, or, alternately, the presence of “non-believers” (those who are faking Evangelical belief for whatever reason) or “backsliders” (those who no longer adhere to mainstream Evangelical beliefs but still identify as Evangelical) within the Body of Christ. Often, the sexual and the social body are frequently and pervasively equated with one another throughout Evangelical rhetoric. One is a “member of the body of Christ” and

the discussion of purity, be it social or sexual, communal or individual, is almost always seeking to frame these the social and the sexual body as the same, so that sexual purity and social purity are constantly intertwined and related. In order to guard against the possibility of contamination of either of these two, the church often functions within a perception of time which focuses on the perpetual affect of a failing modern moment and a promise of a hopeful future. Within this temporal milieu, the Christian stands as within a static moment; denying the human reality of shifting views, changing beliefs, and modified ideologies. Evangelicals place a great value in the knowledge that once one is brought into the fold of Evangelical belief, their ideological view point will remain unchanged throughout their life (and the life to come), thus adhering to the hegemonic, unchanging social body of Evangelical Christianity.

While the outside world undergoes moral attrition that will perpetually pose a greater threat to the purity of the church, it turns a blind eye to the possibility that those within the social body could also prove a source of anxiety as a potential contaminant. In order to maintain this, Evangelicals carefully construct rhetoric that celebrates and encourages perpetual adherence to beliefs, through the practices of personal testimonies and sin-repentance-forgiveness cycles (McFarland). With this construction of time established by various strategies, both intentional and unintentional, within the American Evangelical church, gender norms are established as a performative necessity. These norms are both deeply rooted in a historical past that privileges passion and sentimentality over factuality, and that consistently performs and obscures a tendency towards melodrama. Because of this, the language surrounding the physical bodies of both men and women becomes mythologized and sentimentalized, producing an erasure of the actual body into rhetoric, words, and affirmed actions within the community. Within this context, one of the

major manifestations is a hyper-focus on the primacy of purity as both a moral and a social good, arising within the gendered constructs of Evangelical culture. Within this context, marriage emerges as the zenith of acceptable gender performance, both facilitating and formulating the interactions between the genders and heavily dichotomized and complementary. Heteronormative marriage becomes, in many ways, the ultimate goal of a pure life, providing an acceptable outlet for sexual urges, carefully contained within a highly regulated and controlled social structure.

In the Evangelical church, marriage functions in many ways as a performed metaphor for belief. It is subject to the same insistence on static temporality: just as one is “once and always” a Christian, one is initiated in the marriage through vows, which promise a static temporality of “once and always” married. Often, one’s relationship with Christ is referred to in similar terms, presenting Christ as “the bridegroom” and the church, or members thereof, as “the bride of Christ.” While one may have difficulties, questions, or trouble within one’s marriage, be it physical or spiritual, it is a state of being that is perpetually unchanged. Divorce or separation, if they occur, are likely to be looked down upon in the church, and many claim that the only acceptable reason for divorcing one’s spouse is sexual infidelity, again reflecting the ways in which sexual purity is equated with moral and ethical good.

Marriage is also critical for the Evangelical church because it creates a metaphorical landscape within which Evangelical culture can thrive. Marriage serves as a way to legitimize children, who are presented as the future generation of Evangelical Christians, with the burden on the parents to “raise up a child in the ways he should go.” The tryptic structure of “Father-Mother-Child” presents a sense of stability and social acceptance. The “Father-Mother-Child”

structure also performs as a micro presentation of the church itself, where in the father serves as the patriarchal head and leader, the mother provides support and encouragement within the domestic sphere, and the child functions as the “new believer” being transitioned into the appropriate role within the next generation of church/family. Marriage, then, is supremely important, not only as a affirmation of the larger church structure, but as an affirmation of the individual’s ability to conform and participate within the structure. Those who fall outside of this participation, or even who engage in other designations or relational possibilities, whether unmarried sexual relationships, gay or lesbian relationships, or even singleness without movement towards a designated end-point, are constructed as threatening to the social and communal structure, with implications not only for the individual, but also for the community at large. Such “deviant” relational structures serve to undermine the metaphorical, symbolic necessity of determined and codified gender roles, as well as the structure of the church itself. Without marriage, children are not raised as active participants of the tryptic structure, and the individual does not actively associate him or herself within the perpetually self-correcting gender assignments formed through a husband-wife-child structure.

The emphasis on marriage as a priority is constructed through example, in that it is always already self-perpetuating: if one is exemplified a nuclear family, then one comes to understand this family as the norm. However, when breakdowns occur within the nuclear structure, Evangelical culture is quick to shore up these ruptures with enthusiastic encouragement towards the ideal. *Focus on the Family* and *FamilyLife* are two organizations out of many that are devoted to the affirmation and maintenance of the nuclear family. Producing huge amounts of material online, in print, on the radio, organizations such as these function as ways to codify and trou-

bleshoot the family, creating a body of work which constantly and consistently holds the family, and the active maintenance of the family, as the primary virtue of Evangelical living. Deviance through divorce, unmarried partnership, homosexual tendencies, or sexual relationships outside of marriage are problems to be solved, and the vast body of literature disseminated through churches, radio programs, and Christian bookstores provides the Evangelical with his or her own tools to personally address abnormalities within the Evangelical script, urging others towards a normative relational structure (*FocusontheFamily.com, FamilyLife.com*).

Within the future-focused time structure presented by the Evangelical church, women's bodies are seen as future potential: potential which cannot be realized until the woman is married and can achieve her full worth as a sexual being (Valenti 58). In this way, sexual acts within marriage are presented as nearly spiritual experiences, a way of achieving one's full personhood and fulfilling the sexual, domestic role set forward by the biblical text. But prior to achieving this sexual fulfillment within marriage, the woman must find a way to perpetually present herself as unchangingly pure, with her purity subject to the aggressive insistence on the fact that she could never be otherwise, just as an Evangelical's belief systems are structured within the idea of "once saved, always saved." However, knowing the culpability of humans to engage in sexual activity, being, after all, human, Evangelical culture structures ways for the purity of young women to be aggressively maintained by those in positions of power, including her parents and her church. Women in Evangelical culture are frequently taught that any sexual activity makes them worthless, and truly entire cultures have been built around this kind of aggressive insistence on the purity of young women and girls (24). One example, which I will read into at length, is uniquely

American experience of the Christian purity ball, where fathers and Evangelical organizations focus explicitly on how to produce and maintain the purity of daughters.

### **The Purity Ball**

Each article about the phenomenon of the Christian purity ball begins with a similarly sensational thick description of the squealing masses of girls dolled up in prom-night finery, the suited or tuxedoed fathers, and the vague aura of “creepy” that seems to pervade the event. Video testimonials of elated young girls proclaiming the joy of dressing up, getting their hair done, and being treated like a princess for the evening pervade the promotional materials for these events. These images are placed alongside footage of dour fathers speaking about “lasting impact” and “a night to think back on” (purityball.com). The conservative Evangelical purity ball is a phenomenon that came into existence as early as 1998; isolated from the longstanding traditions of patriarchal oppression and the pervasive rhetoric of sexual purity in the Evangelical Christian church, the purity ball is an event that can readily be seen as a strange and ineffective ritual doused in patriarchy. However, the events are popular, and their popularity is growing. “Dozens of these lavish events are held every year, mainly in the South and Midwest, from Tucson to Peoria and New Orleans, sponsored by churches, nonprofit groups and crisis pregnancy centers” (Baumgardner). South Dakota’s Abstinence Clearinghouse sells hundreds of booklets each year, detailing the process of throwing one of these events, including tips for marketing and branding the evening (Baumgardner).

There are a variety of manifestations of the modern Christian purity/abstinence event, ranging from True Love Waits and Silver Ring Thing, which are large-scale rock concert-style events attended by unchaperoned teenagers of both genders, to mother-daughter tea parties given



by church groups, to the purity ball, which is attended by fathers and daughters. This particular manifestation of the Christian purity event is often given in a church hall or hotel conference room by one of several institutions (frequently heralded as a “ministry”) who provide the necessary information and resources for Christian groups to “sponsor their own purity ball” (purityball.com). The standard purity ball generally includes a dinner, a speaker and invocation of some capacity, a ceremony which commonly includes the giving of a “token” (generally in the form of jewelry) and a white rose to the daughter, and finally a “ceremonial waltz” with the father-daughter duos. While this form is certainly open to variation within the specific purity ball, depending on the attendees and the organizing institution, each of the events holds many of the same elements in common.

In the promotional material for their purity ball event Generations of Light, one of the ministries that provides purity ball resources, writes concerning the role of the father:

The Father Daughter Purity Ball is a powerful ceremony for fathers to sign commitments to be responsible men of integrity in all areas of purity. The commitment also includes their vow to set the standard of honor and integrity in their daughter's lives and to encourage them in their choices for purity. (“Purity Ball Details”)

The father (or father substitute: the purity ball website from The Christian Center proudly proclaims the fact the daughters may also be accompanied by “a grandfather, a family friend, an uncle, a pastor, or someone else who can serve as a godly male role model”) is asked to proclaim a pledge over his daughter, which, in one instance, reads as follows:

I [daughter’s name]’s father, choose before God to cover my daughter as her authority and protection in the area of purity. I will be pure in my own life as a man,

husband, and father. I will be a man of integrity as I lead, guide, and pray over my daughter and as the high priest in my home. This covering will be used by God to influence generations to come. (Valenti 66)

One need only cursorily read the text to note the language of authority. The pseudo-sexual language of “covering” creates a black hole of female agency, wherein the daughters are not only provided no opportunity to control their own sexual identity, but they are also entirely disallowed from defining themselves outside of the structure of sexual identifiers, patriarchal repression and economic viability. One need not have the actual “father,” or even a substitute father at this event, one only needs the structural formation, the order-words of the vows, and the insistence on defined location of the self-perpetuating systems that these events create, in the same way as the marriage vows are regulated in *The Octoroon* and *Divorce*.

These abstinence groups responsible for the purity balls, and the ensuing purity movement in the United States, perpetually cast themselves as the downtrodden minority in cultural dialogue, but also as ultimately responsible to a “higher authority.” This “us versus the world” form of rhetoric pervades the abstinence movement, as The Christian Center states, “It is our pleasure to hold high the banner of purity in the midst of a culture that destroys it” (purityball.com). However, the phenomenon does not rest permanently on this dichotomy of the world as either sacred/secular, but this divide is also internalized within the body itself. The dualistic structures are pushed even further, into the rhetoric of “soul versus flesh,” wherein one divides oneself into two oppositional categories of “holy” and “sinful,” forever seeking to starve the sinful in oneself and to feed and grow that which is holy, stemming from the early churches fascination with the “ascetic/libertine dichotomy” set in place by early gnosticism (Farley 39). This di-

chotomizing of both the world and the self pushes towards the extreme desire to prevent the contamination of that which is considered “sinful,” for fear that it would move ones own identity into the “impure,” forever condemning the sinner to the realm of the other.

This reliance on dichotomy indeed promotes the lack of nuance and individuality in terms of sexual ethics, leading to the struggles participants have to define the tangible outcomes of the event, or even their definition of purity. Without the possibility for engaging in any sexual activity without the fear of contamination, all sexual activity is relegated to the designation of sin. Because this is a practical impossibility for most humans, particularly the girls who are generally uninformed about sexual possibilities other than sex within the confines of marriage, few of the girls can articulate what it means to be pure in actual terms, presenting vague promises to “remain pure of heart” and “not be swayed by the world.” Jennifer Baumgardner writes:

The majority of the girls here are, as the purity ball guidelines suggest, “just old enough . . . [to] have begun menstruating...” But a couple dozen fathers have also brought girls under 10. “This evening is more about spending time with her than her purity at this point,” says one seven year old’s dad, a trifle sheepishly. The event is seemingly innocent— not once do I hear “sex” or “virgin” cross anyone’s lips. Still, every one of the girls here, even the four year-old, will sign that purity covenant.

The male participants quickly move to the sexual implications of the event and the way they seek to increase the value of their daughter by teaching her to “respect herself” and seek a man who will appropriately value their commitment to sexual forbearance. Because of the inability to describe or define the intangible, performative outcomes of the purity ball, the rhetoric surround-

ing it quickly fades into the same method that Josiah Strong used in his celebration of Manifest Destiny: articulating statistical possibility by providing numerical information. This presents the event as something both communal and factual, pushing past the emotional outcomes and participation into the realm of the quantifiable.

Within the variety of purity events which have risen out of purity culture, there is a huge dependence on “large statistical aggregates,” as staple of the abstinence promotional website. Silver Ring Things proudly boasts in a “Stats” box on the homepage, “Worldwide: 507,000+ Attendees, 180,900+ Purity Commitments, 92,800+ Decisions for Christ” ([silverringthing.com](http://silverringthing.com)). Generations of Light proudly proclaims that 1 in 6 adolescents in America have taken a “virginity pledge” ([generationsoflight.com](http://generationsoflight.com)), and indeed, the entire abstinence movement in the United States holds a unique fascination with the proclamation of numbers: the battle over abstinence education, purity events and “virginity” commitments made by teenagers is primarily, it seems, a question of statistics. The various factions of belief concerning the efficacy or lack thereof of these programs is a battleground littered with numbers as each sides seek to buttress their views through statistics on STDs in teens, teen pregnancy, numbers of teenagers who have retracted their pledges, the frequency of vaginal vs. oral sex in teenagers, the evidence of condom use, the number of teens converted to religious standpoints, the number of pledge cards signed, etc. and etc. Indeed, my point here is not that one particular viewpoint on the efficacy of abstinence is more or less valid than another, but rather that all aspects of the dialogue are marked by the use of statistical, empirical evidence, each side seeking to define its position through “bricks of solid matter.” This constructs the “statistical aggregates” that will, they hope, eventually and empirically prove the viability and rightness of their stance on the subject. This, of course, leads to the

creation of the binary subject, not only the reiterated distinction between the sexual roles of the male and the female, but also of the pro-abstinence vs pro-sex camps of rhetoric, endlessly vying over who has the greater mass of numbers.

Rather than swim into the cesspool of the statistic wars, from which there can be no clear winner, it is perhaps more helpful to examine the characters at play within the purity ball format. Looking at questions of agency can present a picture of the purity ball which elucidates the ways in which the purity ball functions, not only as a formative moment in the life of a young girl, but also how it works to construct the figure of the father. The purity ball asks a question about agency, in very clear terms, simply because of the power differentiation between a young girl and her father. In looking at how the events surrounding the purity ball are constructed, we can see the way in which the structural formation serves to not only construct an image and performance of purity and innocence in the figure of the girl, but also the performance of masculine protector in the figure of the father.

The father's role in the purity ball is far more than being a chauffeur for a giggling prom-night teen, although this is certainly contained in the job description. In fact, many of the purity ball websites serve to emphasize the role of the father a great deal more than that of the daughter. This is, unsurprising, given the assumed positionality within the conservative Evangelical Christian church concerning the lack of volition assigned to women and girls. The Christian Center proclaims, "The Bible lays the responsibility of protecting daughters at the feet of their fathers. We desire to charge men with this mantle of responsibility! God thinks the protection of a woman's purity should be extravagant and so do we!" (purityball.com) In each instance of description, it is the men are provided the opportunity for action:

Fathers commit to their daughters . . . The fathers also commit to pursue the hearts of their daughters by working on strengthening their relationships . . . The fathers are the ones signing the covenants . . . A challenge is issued to the fathers . . . as he leads, guides and prays for his family and home. (purityball.com)

On the other hand, the only mention of the agency of the daughter between both The Christian Center and Generation of Light's websites was the action of "silently committing to purity" (generationsoflight.com). In a promotional interview on The Christian Center's website, a father speaks plainly to the camera about his intention in attending the purity ball, proclaiming that "Not only is it a fun time to dress up and go out, it really brings you closer together. ... The covenant that we sign together is a very serious thing. I think that it will make both of us think in future years as we think about purity" (purityball.com) This is juxtaposed with video footage of his daughter, alternately smiling and serious, gushing about how lovely it is to be taken on a date by her father.

In her book, *The Purity Myth*, Jessica Valenti writes about the strange sexual confusion of the language of a father/daughter date. She quotes an article featured on the website of the conservative Christian organization, Focus on the Family:

Katie giggles as she waits for her date to come around and open the car door. The pair enters an ice cream shop. She sits down at the table as her date gently pushes in her chair. He takes her hand from across the table and asks, "What flavor would you like tonight, Sugar?" Katie smiles and says, "I'll have chocolate, Daddy." More and more fathers are becoming aware of their influence and are regularly dating their daughters. (68)

The language of the romantic relationship which pervades the Evangelical Christian father-daughter relationship is blatantly obvious at the purity ball where the father assumes the dominating role over the protection of his daughter's virginity, thinly veiled under language of dating; the horror, of course, is contained in the objective of a "dating" relationship, wherein eventual outcome is a sexual relationship of the dating couple within heteronormative structures. This places the subcultural performance of the purity ball within the rhetorical milieu of incest, wherein the father dominates his child: a serious removal of agency from the daughter, defining her morality, identity and worth in terms of her future sexual possibility.

The case for the father in this particular instance creates the kind of environment frequently attacked by various feminist authors writing against the purity ball. Numerous articles have come out in the past few years as the purity ball as related purity events have risen in popularity among Christian subcultures. Nearly all of these authors argue that the father inflicts unnecessary pain and/or emotional trauma on the daughter who is still too young to recognize either significance of the pledge to purity she is making or her own lack of agency in the process of signification of her body as morally viable through the denial of sexual identity. Not only does the daughter have no recourse for escape from the narrative constructed around her, but she is reduced to the capacity of "good" equated with sexual purity and "evil" equated with sexual activity of an undefined nature, thereby creating her entire sense of morality around sexual purity.

One of the strangest examples of this form of oppression through the use of the word "purity" itself. While it is obvious to the outsider that the girls are pledging to remain physical virgins until their marriages, the physical act of intercourse itself is rarely, if ever, mentioned at

the purity ball. In a promotional video that features a number of interviews with participants, two young girls struggle to define the word “virginity.” One girl in a shiny blue dress and tiara states, “It means not kissing boys before I’m married. Not looking at them in inappropriate ways” (“Purity Ball”). Another girl states, “The Bible says that Jesus is pure, and I like Jesus and I want to be like him, so I want to be pure too” (“Purity Ball”). The use of the word “purity” clearly holds different meanings for the various participants of the purity ball: for the father, the ultimate pre-occupation appears to be the sexual virginity of their daughter until marriage, while the promoters of the events argue that “purity” is a mental, sexual and moral purity. For the daughters, the word “purity” is barely equated with sexual activity, primarily because most of the girls are sheltered from any knowledge of what sexual activity would include. These various definitions serve as a distinct mode of oppression, as the daughters at these events are asked to commit to a lifestyle without adequate knowledge of what a commitment to purity would entail. They are, in essence, constructed by their fathers as “virgin,” set into a static mode of existence through the linguistic coercion of the purity pledge. Because of the power structures in place, this construction is an assertion of the father’s dominance, wherein he is provided control over the body of another, withholding agency and causing the daughter’s ultimate dependence on his eventual acquiescence to her sexual possibility through the “handing over” of her virginity to a father-substitute.

Video and still photos from this moment are particularly disturbing, as some of the older girls could easily be mistaken for younger wives or for girlfriends as their fathers hold them in a close embrace, kiss their foreheads or gaze meaningfully into their eyes. In a promotional video on YouTube, a group of girls stand in a circle around a hotel ballroom, their fathers behind and beside them, delicately placing their arms and hands on the shoulders of the girls, some of whom



appear as young as seven or eight, dolled up in finery with brows knit together with the seriousness of the moment. Their eyes are all closed as they carefully repeat the words of a prayer together (“Purity Ball”). In a few moments they will all exit the ballroom, taking with them the physical tokens of the evening: a silver purity bracelet, a calligraphic commitment card and a white rose. However, the evening will not end here: the process of becoming pure, of maintaining one’s status as virgin is a perpetual work against the world. It is to be the subject of constant and consistent focus in the lives of these daughters, from the moment of their girlhood until they are safely transitioned into their eventual role as wife.

Clearly, the role of marriage in Evangelical life is a highly regulated moment, one that creates and constructs the idealized gender norms within Evangelical life. Demonstrated throughout 19th century performances, marriage presents itself as an act which is not only foreclosed to particular populations of the United States, but also an expected and assumed act for other segments of the larger population. In the 19th century, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the idealized marriage, particularly as it was becoming increasingly legislated by state governments. This emphasis directed attention towards the fact that the stability of a monogamous, heteronormative, and white marriage reflects the stability of the nation itself. This desire for stability of both the marital body and the national body is reinforced through the patriarchal structures of time that focus on the future potential of both the woman and the nation as a fertile objects. As marriage transitions into a modern context, the same desire for control over the body of the female— particularly the girl, whose purity is an ultimate concern, in order for her to fulfill her role as wife— demonstrates the importance of marriage within an Evangelical context.

The role of marriage in the Evangelical church, however, is not the final destination in the life of the woman. In the next chapter, discussion moves to address the role of the woman as mother, both within a 19th century performative context, as well as within the contemporary Evangelical church. It is through the moment of becoming-mother that, in many ways, the woman fulfills the role that she has been set aside for since girlhood. In terms of both time and emotion, the transition into motherhood—the process of giving birth—positions the woman, again, to the hyper-realized control of patriarchal constructs, particularly within the examples given. Addressing the fact that childbirth remains a central signifier in the rhetoric of both the nation and the Evangelical church, it remains clear that the woman's role of wife is, just as childhood is, transitory, and her eventual responsibilities to her children overshadow the responsibilities she holds to her husband, or even her own sense of personal agency.

## CHAPTER THREE: CHILDBIRTH

### The Melodramatic Mother and the Fertile Body

As prior chapters have worked through the manifestations of purity in both the 19th century and the modern Evangelical church, this chapter moves forward another step, looking at the concept of birth and childbearing, as well as the restrictions and regulations imposed on this moment in a woman's life. Moving out from a discussion of Herne's play *Margaret Fleming*, first produced in 1890, into the use of reproductive control and medical procedures in the 19th century, I investigate the various ways in which procreation is posited as a corollary good to, and indeed, the ultimate goal of purity during 19th century. However, this is certainly not the whole story, as frequently the idealized narrative of birth was disrupted by a number of factors, of which the ability to conceive is just one small facet. In this chapter, I will be looking first at how birth was idealized in the narratives of 19th century performance as the ultimate culmination of an understanding of purity, but then I will turn to three disruptions to this idealized understanding: the desire of the woman to forego or forestall conception or birth, the understanding that only certain forms of womanhood merited birth as an idealized possibility or manifestation of purity, and the medical interventions that served to affirm and strengthen patriarchal control over the female body. Reading into James Herne's play *Margaret Fleming*, which rose in popularity directly following the heyday of melodrama and relies on many of the same tropes, provides an investigation of the validity of a woman's role as the procreator of future generations.

In this chapter, I address the role of the woman as mother, first in a 19th century context, and then in terms of the Evangelical culture that relies on the same tropes set into motion in the

later portion of the 19th century. After briefly addressing the idealization of motherhood during this era, I then move to discuss the disruptions to this ideal, particularly in terms of the medical procedures surrounding birth control, abortion and the process of giving birth. After addressing these issues within the performative example of *Margaret Fleming*, I then turn to the Evangelical moment, wherein women's role as mother is presented as a primary indication and fulfillment of the desire for purity. The Quiverfull movement provides an example of how motherhood is constructed within Evangelical thought, demonstrating both the significance of children to the Evangelical movement, and the affective power of Evangelical culture to narrowly define women within their reproductive capabilities.

### **Idealized Motherhood**

Looking first at the idealization of motherhood in terms of the 19th century's emphasis on sentimental modes of emotional understanding, we can see that motherhood was positioned as the primary goal and purpose of a woman's life. Women were expected to fulfill their role, which was affirmed and glorified in popular literature, print media and theatre productions. As the Reverend John Todd wrote:

If now, any one should say that this is a small profession or a low duty, I reply, that it is more lofty and more responsible than if it were assigned to you to lay the foundations of many suns to shine in the heavens for a few ages; it is taking what is immortal at its setting hour, and deciding what path it shall tread, what character it shall bear, and what destiny it shall obtain. You are deciding, during the first years of its training, whether the new star shall travel and shine through the bright heavens, mingling its light with that of the glorious constellations, or

whether it shall be quenched shortly and be lost in darkness and forgetfulness.

(Barker-Benfield "Horrors" 216)

His concern with the role of the mother, hinging on her ability to guide her children into a place among the "constellations," demonstrates the positionality of women as they entered their maternal role. His use of hyperbolic, metaphorical language places women within a mythical landscape, where their role is glorified and politicized. The perfectly caring wife was to concern herself within the domestic sphere, bearing children for the sake of her husband and her country. These children were supposed to be hale and hearty, well trained and obedient to the voices of authority. The bulk of their early education resided with the maternal care of the mother, who undertook her role with grace, diligence and utter submission to her husband's public role and her children's future one.

Mary McCartin Wearn, in her book, *Negotiating Motherhood in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, reads into the advice literature that was oriented towards mothers during this era. She looks at Lydia Sigourney's 1838 work, *Letters to Mothers*, where Sigourney states:

You are sitting with your child in your arms. So am I. And I have never been as happy as before. Have you? How this new affection seems to spread a soft, fresh green over the soul. Does not the whole heart blossom thick with plants of hope, sparkling with perpetual dew drops? What a loss, had we passed through the world without tasting this purest, most exquisite fount of love. (5)

This demonstration of the sentimental aspects of motherhood, including the idealized love between a mother and a child, shows a small example of the ways in which motherhood was presented as the ultimate happiness in a woman's life. However, Wearn also points out the problem-

atic situation that this idealized image of motherhood created for woman, “while offering women cultural prestige and a viable sphere of influence, the sentimental maternal ideology that took root in the nineteenth century held darker sway as well. The programmatic scripts of maternity that flourished during the era were often simplistic, rigid, and prescriptive” (4). The problems with the “programmatic scripts” of motherhood reduced the role of women, and, furthermore, caused women to find ways to subvert the idealism of motherhood as they asserted their own agency within lived experience, which often deviated from the ideal in various ways. The subversion could manifest itself in the desire to forego or delay conception and childbirth, although, when looked at more closely, it becomes clear that this desire was not merely a selfish desire on the part of the wife avoiding a “programmatic” role, but instead was often framed as a way to best ensure the survival of the nation. Other deviations were often prescribed by society itself, particularly when one considers the national assumption of a white, native-born population. As the 19th century public negotiated the increasingly legislated world, the role of childbirth was transitioning from the idealized fictions of popular media into a public debate that included discussions of birth control, abortion, the desired population of the United States and the medicalization of birth.

While the role of mother was indeed performed again and again in the fantasies of both men and women of the time, the reality of motherhood was often a vastly different as a lived experience. One of the key factors of childbirth that needed to be considered was the emotional and physical toll that a lifetime of uninterrupted pregnancies had on a woman’s wellbeing, not to mention the wellbeing of the child. This issue was pressing, not only for the mothers it affected, but also for the country at large. As a fledgeling nation, the United States of America was highly

concerned with the viability of the Anglo-Saxon American citizen: in order to thrive as a state, the children of these idealized citizens needed to be intelligent, physically capable, and willing to undertake their role within the union. In this way, birth became a primary metaphor for the growth of the nation as a whole, and women were charged, quite literally, with the birthing of the new American citizen (Wearn 6). However, rather than being celebrated and lauded for their role in nation-building through the bearing and rearing of children, women were much more likely to be treated as unwieldy vessels for birth. Because of this, during their childbearing years, women needed to be under close masculine scrutiny and medical intervention. The fear over women's lack of ability to maintain their health during childbirth is clearly outlined by Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg:

Since the beginnings of the nineteenth century, American physicians and social commentators generally had feared that American women were physically inferior to their English and Continental sisters. The young women of the urban middle and upper classes seemed in particular less vigorous, more nervous than either their own grandmothers or European contemporaries. Concern among physicians, educators, and publicists over the physical deterioration of American womanhood grew steadily during the nineteenth century and reached a high point in its last third. (Smith-Rosenberg "Female" 339).

The fact that this reproductive function was relegated solely to women was incredibly problematic for men, who would have far preferred that the health and well-being of future citizens did not rest entirely with the other sex. Indeed, there is a great deal of research that claims that gynecology

logical and obstetrics were created with punishment, rather than health, in mind. Martha H. Verbrugge, describing the work of Ann D. Wood, writes:

Wood argues that nineteenth-century medicine was crude. The imperfect states of knowledge and practice, however, does not adequately explain for her the oppressiveness of gynecology. She concludes that medicine was based on “veiled but aggressively hostile male sexuality and superiority. Acting in fear, doctors manipulated women both physically and psychologically; physicians and their patients were engaged in subtle but vicious “psychological warfare.” (960)

While this distinct form of gendered “warfare” was certainly not true across the entire nation in every iteration, the fact that men felt the need to control and manipulate women within the realm of medicinal practice demonstrates the fear and lack of understanding surrounding the narratives of gestation and birth, as well as the unavailability of producing legitimate and healthy citizens. Stemming from the same fear and desire surrounding the female body that produced the insistence on purity throughout girlhood and marriage, the control over the moment of childbirth is another facet of the relegation of women to reductive roles in the favor of patriarchal control.

Just as in the liminal phase of girlhood, the woman who was transitioning from her role as wife into her role as mother was often construed as both dangerous and uncertain. In efforts to control the seemingly unknowable woman, men often formulated her as frail, weak and entirely susceptible to diseases and nervous conditions, some of which were self-fulfilling as women negotiated the constricted spaces of domestic interiors (Smith-Rosenberg “Hysterical” 673). Because of this, birth itself was both a moment of extreme importance for the health and wellbeing of the United States as a whole, but also a period where the future of the child’s life was consid-



ered in jeopardy, with the woman placing herself, her unborn child and the future of the nation in danger, merely through the act of being pregnant and giving birth. The only way to guard against this was the increasingly masculine profession of obstetrics, which, by the turn of the century, was edging out midwifery as a medical field (Barker-Benfield "Spermatic" 59-60). As obstetrics developed as a medical field, birth became a moment which was increasingly surveilled by legislative and medical procedures, and subject to many of the same concerns as the developing nation, which as a whole was concerned with instituting procedures that would allow the health of the nation to be maintained on a larger scale than one's immediate community.

With the health of the white, native-born population as a foremost goal, and with the transition from a communally-oriented midwifery practice into the medicalized field of obstetrics, advances in reproductive technologies presented themselves as viable options to women. This, of course, contained mixed results, as birthing procedures could easily be seen as constricting and unconcerned with the health of the woman in favor of her child; however, they could also be seen as a boon to women, particularly insofar as the medical profession aided women in their desire for reproductive controls. Because the woman was at greater risk the more pregnancies she underwent, the medical profession at the time turned its attention towards providing women with the necessary means to delay pregnancies, in order that the frailness of the woman could be moderated by medical intervention, giving better survival rates to the nation's future (Rosenberg 138). This factor, in hand with the the increasing medicalization of birth practices and reproductive control, rising alongside the increased legislation of both marriage and birth, was a significant shift that was occurring during the latter half of the 19th century, producing changes that would echo throughout American history into the modern moment.

## 19th Century Reproductive Control

Two particular ideas in concert— that of preventing conception before it occurred, and aborting the fetus once a woman became pregnant— were, as they are now, areas that are fraught with moral components and critiques. Many railed on both sides of the issue, with little possibility for resolve. However, this moral debate, so worn into the fabric of American dialogue, was not necessarily the strict dualism of pro-life/pro-choice that we see plastered on media headlines today. Rather, in the 19th century, the desire for reproductive control was a significant concern for women and men, particularly when understood in terms of the desire for spacing children within the family, as there were vastly fewer medical options for aiding a woman who was at risk for a troublesome pregnancy after she became pregnant. Women who had multiple successive births with little time between them were at a higher risk for a number of problems, as were the children they bore. Rather than position reproductive control in terms of the ability to forego bearing children altogether, in the 19th century, women were likely more interested in reproductive control which allowed them to extend the period of time between births and conception of children within marriage (Brodie 36-7, Rosenberg 151).

With the vast societal changes which occurred with the advent of the contraceptive pill, it is easy to ignore or dismiss the methods of family planning and reproductive control used prior to the 1960s. However, married couples during this time had several options available to them; while not nearly as affective as hormonal-based methods, they did allow men and women to establish a form of control over their sexual lives and reproduction. The most prevalent means of birth control were the withdraw method, douching, or the rhythm method, used either individually or in conjunction with one another, as well as extended breastfeeding after birth (Brodie 57-8).

None of these methods, by modern standards, are considered particularly effective at preventing birth, but there is some evidence that they were at least moderately effective, especially compared to the alternative, which was no method of birth control whatsoever. The withdraw method was generally effective, but there were concerns in the mid-19th century that it affected the sexual pleasure and virility of the man, leading to medical problems of his own, causing “general debility of brains and brawn” (62). Partial withdraw was also considered acceptable, although pregnancies still frequently occurred using this method. Douching was a regular practice, and women often added solvents— “tannin, powdered opium, prussic acid, iodine, or strychnine dissolved in water”— to the douche (68). This could have some spermicidal affect, but it more likely worked by changing the pH of the uterus, so that it could not support the implantation of the fertilized egg (74). The rhythm method, on the other hand, if used by itself was like to have the least effect, as most experts on reproductive control suggested that a woman released her egg directly after menstruation, and would encourage woman to resume sex six to ten days after menstruation, when the woman was most likely to be fertile. If a woman had a uniquely short cycle, this could be effective, but for the majority of women the rhythm method alone, if followed in accordance with 19th century standards, would have failed to prevent conception (85). Other methods were available, but had varying levels of success: condoms were available, but expensive. Vaginal sponges and diaphragms may have been available in some places as well, and if used correctly may have had some success, although it may have opened women up to infection and discomfort during intercourse (72).

One of the biggest factors in successful reproductive control was not necessarily the dissemination of products which allowed for these methods, but rather, the information which

would allow women to use them in a manner which would work. Many of the methods, aside from condoms or other barrier methods, would have been fairly easy to obtain: douching was accomplished with a simple syringe, with materials that were available in a kitchen, and withdrawal and rhythm methods did not require any materials, a “real alternative to every respectable, churchgoing American woman” (Smith-Rosenberg “Female” 339). Rather, what was important was the information about reproductive control that allowed women to feel comfortable using these methods, as well as communication between sexual partners in order to effectively accomplish these procedures. In order for reproductive control to be effective, women needed the support of both the society at large, in order to obtain the information and materials necessary, as well as the support of her sexual partner, in order to effectively execute these methods. While reproductive control is often considered the responsibility of the woman, it is clear that, especially in the 19th century, it was an act which required support of both one’s immediate and larger community (79).

This kind of communal support for the project of reproductive control waxed and waned throughout the 19th century, as many historians are quick to cite the Comstock Laws, which were passed on March 3, 1873. This act made it a misdemeanor to send or receive “obscene literature or objects of immoral use,” the most obvious of which was information and materials related to reproductive control. The effect of the Comstock Laws was long-lasting and disempowering to both the men and the women who were interested in preventing or delaying birth, particularly in poor and rural areas (Brodie 284). However, many stories rise up during this time of people who rejected the Comstock Laws entirely, some of whom were jailed multiple times for breaking the restriction. Despite the Comstock Law’s effect, many tried to subvert the restric-

tions, providing, at the very least, the information that would allow for family planning, as “contraceptive information continued to circulate in medical if not popular texts” (Freedman 198). One must also not underestimate the role of this information spreading via word of mouth or popular knowledge (Brodie 282). While the Comstock Laws caused undue difficulty in the distribution of materials and information which would allow for successful family planning, they did not entirely prevent the movement of goods and information, pointing towards the profound need and desire for women and men both to be able to control the reproductive process.

Besides these methods to prevent birth, there was another option available to women who did not want to be pregnant in the 19th century: abortion, either by medical procedure or the procurement of abortifacients. In the 19th century, this option was certainly available to women, with widespread prevalence. In their essay on “medical and biological views of women,” Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg address the availability of abortions in 19th century America. They write:

Particularly alarming was the casualness, doctors charged, with which seemingly respectable wives and mothers contemplated and undertook abortions, and how routinely they practiced birth control. One prominent New York gynecologist complained in 1874 that well-dressed women walked into his consultation room and asked for abortions as casually as they would for a cut of beefsteak at their butcher. In 1857, the American Medical Association nominated a special committee to report on the problem; then appointed another in the 1870s; between these dates and especially in the late 1860s, medical societies throughout the country passed resolutions attacking the prevalence of abortion and birth control and con-

demning physicians who performed and condoned such illicit practices. Nevertheless, abortions could, in the 1870s, be obtained in Boston and New York for as little as ten dollars, while abortifacients could be purchased more cheaply or through the mail. Even the smallest villages and rural areas provided a market for the abortionist's services; women often aborted any pregnancy which occurred in the first few years of marriage. The Michigan Board of Health estimated in 1898 that one third of all the state's pregnancies ended in abortion. From 70 to 80 percent of these were secured, the board contended, by prosperous and otherwise respectable married women who could not offer even the unmarried mother's "excuse of shame." By the 1880s, English medical moralists could refer to birth control as the "American sin" and warn against England's women following in the path of America's faithless wives. (Smith-Rosenberg "Female" 343)

While Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg present an interesting case about the prevalence of abortion procedures available to women in the 19th century, they present a dichotomy between the male perspective and the female, where women advocate for the necessity and availability of birth control while men seem desirous that women produce as many offspring as possible. While it was certainly true that certain members of the medical profession or the clergy, who were often male, repudiated and spoke out against the prevalence of abortion, the mere fact of its availability and use point towards another picture: one in which society itself was, for the most part, complicit, and, if only in silence, understanding of the need for procedures which allowed for the spacing and regulation of families. While Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg produce a picture of "hostility towards women," from male members of the medical field, the ability for a woman to

both ask for and receive an abortion with the amount of casualness described provokes an image of a medical field which enabled them to do so, rather than restricting access to such procedures across the board (344).

This perception of the 19th century as a period of strict control and lack of options for women who were kowtowed by men into a role of unwilling mother is not necessarily the reality of the situation, in fact, this perception serves to reflect more on our contemporary perception of birth control and abortion than the 19th century's. For instance, in the same essay, the authors state:

Though fathers played a necessary role in procreation, medical opinion emphasized that it was the mother's constitution and reproductive capacity which most directly shaped her offspring's physical, mental, and emotional attributes. And any unhealthy mode of life—anything in short which seemed undesirable to contemporary medical moralists, including both education and birth control— might result in a woman becoming sterile or capable of bearing only stunted offspring.

(Smith-Rosenberg "Female" 351)

However, this view of highly-dichotomized male/female viewpoints on birth regulation does not account for the way in which birth control products or information were disseminated through society: namely, it would be very difficult for a woman to practice birth control or procure an abortion during the 19th century without the consent and aid of her partner. Because of the need for birth control— including withdraw, douching or the rhythm method— to take place either during or immediately after sexual intercourse, the male would certainly have needed to be a willing participant, (particularly insofar as the rhythm or withdraw method were concerned). Ad-

ditionally, while it may have been possible to receive an abortion without one's sexual partner knowing, it would have required the support from and availability within society at large: including the medical profession.

Indeed, in many ways, it was in the man's best interest to have reliable birth control, even, or perhaps especially, when one includes the concerns about the growing nation. Simply put, the more children a woman had, the more likely they were to suffer both infant or maternal fatality, longer recovery times, or sickness after childbirth. Likewise, the more children a family had, the less likely they were to be able to transition between social classes; fewer children were associated positively with social mobility. Between the health and social concerns that were common knowledge at the time, and many people— men and women both— were concerned with their own safety and the safety of their children when they desired appropriate ways to engage in intercourse without the constant concern of conception. This point is very clearly demonstrated by Janet Farrell Brodie in her book, *Contraception and Abortion in 19th Century America*, when she writes, "In antebellum America it is true that women had far less access than men to books and products pertaining to reproductive control. The culture tended to set constraints on reading material and information for women. Women therefore had to rely on their husbands for information" (159). While this may point towards the male control over— including denial of— reproductive rights, the obvious and documented use of reproductive technologies pointed towards male participation in the practice of family planning. Brodie's nuanced view of the use of contraceptive technologies also points towards the social implications of restricting childbirth. While it may not have been advantageous for a rural family in an agricultural environment to



limit their family size, as they depended on the labor of their children, many middle-class Americans began to see limits in family size as beneficial to upper social mobility (157).

It is clear throughout the literature of the 19th century that men and women both were either accepting or repulsed by the idea of reproductive technologies, and that men and women both were also concerned with promoting their viewpoints. To set up a false dichotomy of “women for/men against” is to falsely accuse various genders of prescriptive viewpoints on reproduction, as well as to elide the availability and prevalence of procedures and techniques for restricting birth during the 19th century. While some men certainly opposed the idea of reproductive technologies, such as John Ellis, who wrote *Deterioration of the Puritan Stock and Its Causes* in 1884, others aided their wives in obtaining contraceptive materials, performed abortion procedures, or willingly participated in the withdraw or rhythm methods. It is clear that, during the 19th century, while motherhood was certainly equated with the ultimate becoming of womanhood and a woman’s fulfillment of her pure self, it was an area which was full of both nuance and radical shifts in perspective from what is commonly understood as a profound disagreement between the genders concerning a woman’s ability to forestall or forego pregnancy.

The desire for reproductive technologies present a powerful example of the divide between the idealization of a woman’s body and capabilities, and the actualities of physical existence. I posit that many of the detractors who sought to institute legislation that would inhibit or prevent the availability of birth control, such as Anthony Comstock, were operating under the desire for women to live up to a standard of purity which was idealized and mythologized within the late 19th century, wherein women were divorced from the actuality of the physical strain and danger of giving birth. Because the desire for birth control necessitated the acknowledgement of

sexual practices, the legislated denial of reproductive technologies allowed detractors to maintain the illusion of female purity, while at the same time promoting the well-being of the white, native-born population through population expansion. The connection between the use of reproductive technologies and purity, however, is more complex than a mere for/against, impure/pure dichotomy: within the 19th century, the use of birth control does not necessarily relegate a woman into the realm of impurity, particularly because the assumed use of reproductive technologies was within the marriage relationship. The use of birth control and related technologies, however, has profound implications for the agency of the woman. While she was provided some measure of agency concerning the desire for delaying pregnancy (although even this agency would be removed by proponents of the Comstock and similar laws), even the availability of reproductive technologies failed to remove women from the idealization of motherhood as an ultimate goal. Its use within the marriage relationship, as well as the societal constructs that glorified the bearing of children and the role of mother, prevented a woman from engaging in un-nuanced control of her own reproductive identity. The perpetual battle over the availability and denial of reproductive technologies created a culture wherein women's choice to delay or forego children was under constant scrutiny from both the immediate community and the state's legislative control, providing yet another instance where women were constructed within a role constructed for them by society.

While the denial of reproductive technologies through the Comstock Laws may have worked as a logical ideology, in practicality, it ignored the needs of a growing nation, wherein women and men both desired the ability to maintain control over their reproductive lives. As the desire for birth control and the legislation surrounding it develop throughout American history,

this impulse towards the desire for maintaining the illusion of sexual purity, even within the marriage relationship, heavily influences the debates surrounding birth control and its availability, as I discuss further in the latter portion of this chapter. However, it is important to also address another trend that was developing during the latter half of the 19th century, namely the medicalization of birth. This is certainly a corollary to the investigation of 19th century birth control practices, and shows many of the same aspects, including the propensity to overly-dichotomize the medicalization of birth as a gendered “warfare” between the natural process of giving birth and the practice of obstetrics. In looking at this subject, both the re-historicizing of the trend, as well as the implications for contemporary practice, become obvious.

### **Medicalization of Birth**

Several authors have presented research which promotes another dichotomous relationship: men’s institution and promotion of the medicalization of the act of giving birth, and women’s reliance on a more natural, midwife-centered birth experience. This narrative, again, fits into the contemporary reading of childbirth, where women are encouraged to return to natural birth as a means of celebrating childbearing as a uniquely female form of empowerment. Many modern mothers reject the idea of a hospital birth, the use of drugs or technologies to initiate labor, or painkilling drugs during labor, such as the epidural. Increasingly, women, generally white, middle and upper class women, seek out home births, unassisted by doctors or drugs, and numerous births are considered part of the “alternative childbirth model.” Within the model, birth is considered a “non-pathological, normal body function” and “inherently safe in the majority of situations” (O’Connor 148). These beliefs lead to the idea that “normal birth does not belong in hospitals, and medical management is not necessary,” but more than this, medical birth is vili-

fied, as “hospital procedures interfere with bonding and are therefore damaging to the well-being of all family members” and “the judgments and interpretations of medical personnel do not necessarily constitute the most authoritative or appropriate sources of information” (149). Alternative childbirth models claim that parents are “relegated . . . to roles of incompetence and spectatorship” in their child’s birth (150). Much of this idea is perpetrated by the idea that women have been giving birth naturally for as long as humans have existed, and therefore, the ultimate “feminist” act is to reject the sterilized medical establishment, which is often spoken of in masculine terms. This type of childbirth can take various forms, but is generally considered to be midwife- or doula-lead, and can take place in a home or in a birthing center. The movement back into the alternative childbirth model, which began in the 1970s and continues until today, is “recognized as a largely white, middle class phenomenon” (152). This alternative childbirth model, in many ways, tends to create an antagonism between the medical field and the “feminist” practice of natural birth. This antagonism, then, is often traced backwards, to the very origin of obstetrics as a medical field, promoting the idea that medical interventions in birth are inherently and historically against the feminist cause, and are strictly formulated around the desire for men to control and regulate women’s natural biological processes.

However, this understanding is not necessarily correct, but rather, is a misremembering of the moment when the medical establishment began to prove an interest in women’s labor and delivery. However, the idea of men “meddling” in the biological affairs of women is, for the most part, unquestionably assumed within the alternative childbirth models. For instance, G. Barker-Benfield writes in his essay on the spermatic economy, “the gynecologists’ underlying aims cannot be separated from the society in which they moved: these aims were retaliation

against and control of women, and the assumption of as much of their reproductive power as possible, all part and parcel of the projective meaning of the subordination of “the sex” (59). He continues:

American gynecologists reached the climax of their hundred years’ war against midwives in the first two decades of the twentieth century, implementing a legislative and propaganda campaign, the latter to persuade women that “normal” pregnancy and parturition were the exception, and childbirth a “wound” that only the expertise of males could master. Midwives were finally driven out before World War II, and in 1968, 99 percent of all women were delivered by men. (60)

Despite Barker-Benfield’s argument, there is a different side to the story, one which does not necessarily promote the viewpoint that women were somehow salvifically “delivered” by men. (Noting, of course, the absence of the infant’s delivery in Barker-Benfield’s writing; rather it is the mother who must be delivered: from whom?) When one looks more closely at this moment in history, when the process of giving birth transitioned from the realm of the midwife to the realm of the gynecologist, there are several aspects which Barker-Benfield, and other theorists who promote the dichotomized understanding of men/medical versus women/natural, have ignored: namely, that the transition that was made away from the midwife was largely directed by women, specifically by feminist organizations that promoted pain-free labor as a movement towards women’s rights and liberation from the biological necessity of undergoing physical anguish during delivery.

Just as birth control and reproductive rights were viewed as a way to avoid the potential danger and pain associated with childbirth, so to was the movement that occurred from “natural”

childbirth to childbirth that made use of the advances in medical technologies. Indeed, what Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg write concerning birth control and family planning can be easily read in the context of giving birth: “Women could begin to view the pain and bodily injury which resulted from such pregnancies not simply as a condition to be borne with fatalism and passivity, but as a situation that could be avoided” (Smith-Rosenberg “Female” 345). In many ways, both birth control and the medicalization of childbirth were means to the same end, and both were promoted and practiced, as well as rejected and railed against, by both men and women, despite the desire to relegate birth control and the medicalization of birth as woman’s conflict and men’s, respectively. In the late 19th century, reforms were being made by the medical profession to make birth easier for women. One of the most lauded technologies arrived at the turn of the century, recommended by Dr. Schneiderlin in 1899. It was termed “twilight sleep,” and was a combination of scopolamine and morphia; it served to replace chloroform or ether, both of which functioned as recommended painkillers during childbirth prior to twilight sleep. Given the hazards of both of these earlier forms, they were never widely used in America, and most women gave birth without the assistance of painkillers until the development of twilight sleep. The use of twilight sleep was championed, for the most part, by the National Twilight Sleep Association, which was a group determined to bring pain-free childbirth to women.

Samantha Shapiro writes:

For much of history many feminists have come out on the side of fleeing from nature, not embracing it. In the early 1900s, feminists played a significant role in moving birth out of the domain of midwives and the home and into the hospital.

In 1915, a group of suffragists, professionals and housewives formed the National

Twilight Sleep Association to lobby for access to scopolamine, an amnesiac that when paired with morphine allowed women to go into labor and forget the experience afterward. In retrospect, twilight sleep looks barbaric; women on the drugs thrashed violently and were often hooded or placed in cage-beds while they labored. But many women demanded it, staging meetings where they testified about the benefits of twilight-sleep birth: shorter, less painful labors, better breastfeeding, fewer forceps deliveries and an easier recovery. (“Mommy Wars”)

This promotion, although it takes place after the turn of the century, presents the nuance which pervaded 19th century birth practices, from conception to delivery, despite the prevalent, and often convenient, narratives of gender wars and ensuing constructions of birth practices and desires which may speak more truth to the current status of birth practices in the United States than those of the 19th century.

This ascribing of gendered viewpoints where the medicalization of birth is concerned, which is a narrative that is not necessarily true or overarching, promotes the ideology of men’s control over women’s biological processes, with women as the passive victims of increased scrutiny. While in some cases this is certainly true, the moments of female agency within the transition into medicalized procedures cannot be displaced by a modern narrative of alternative birth models. The nuance inherent in the birth process during this time holds several implications for the investigation of women’s role as mother and her engagement with the liminal phase of childbirth. The moment of childbirth, in many ways, became a moment wherein the conflict between the woman’s desire for personal agency, be it through pain management or the use of reproductive technologies, and the masculine impulse to control of the “programmatic” roles that required

women to transfer safely from the role of wife into the role of mother were particularly highlighted. In many ways, a woman could assert her agency within the biological function of childbirth, but only insofar as it facilitate her movement into the necessary role of mother. The role was particularly necessary, because of its implications for the developing national project: motherhood, as the culmination of a woman's experience of childbirth, was a role that was constantly and consistently metaphorically related to the growth and nurturing of the nation itself.

### **A National Good**

There is one cultural movement that must also be dealt with when discussing the use of birth control and the medicalization of birth practices: the desire for white, middle-class, native-born Americans to both legitimize and grow the white, native-born race. Indeed, it was often seen as an ultimate value, and indeed the culmination of a white woman's duty to her husband and her country to bear children, in order that white, native-born Americans would not be outnumbered by the rapidly swelling ranks of immigrants who were coming to America's shores. Immigration became a rising concern in the latter half of the 19th century, particularly as the increasing industrialized population was growing rapidly, creating sparks of labor disputes and growing urban slums. During this time:

previously vague or romantic notions of Anglo-Saxon peoplehood, combined with general ethnocentrism, rudimentary wisps of genetics, selected tidbits of evolutionary theory, and naive assumptions from an early and crude imported anthropology produced the doctrine that the English, Germans, and others of the 'old immigration' constituted a superior race of tall, blonde, blue-eyed 'Nordics' or 'Aryans,' whereas the people of eastern and southern Europe made up the darker



Alpines or Mediterraneans— both ‘inferior’ breeds whose presence in America threatened, either by intermixture or supplementation, the traditional American stock and culture. (Gordon 268)

The fear over a rising middle-class that was composed of supposedly “inferior” peoples developed into legislative practice, beginning with Chinese immigration restriction laws passed in 1882. This anxiety over the body of the other invading the land, “illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order, and government,” manifested itself not only in the practices of birth control and regulation in the United States, but also in the legislation that surrounded the topic (269). As Anglo-Saxon America developed fears about being outnumbered and outbred, the dominant narratives presented a picture of idealized birth and citizen-creation that sought to alleviate and control the popular anxiety.

In many ways, this is where the distinction between reproductive control and pain management in birth are again similar: both are invested in producing a healthy, strong and native-born American citizen. However, a great deal of backlash during the 19th century arises when proponents of the development of the Anglo-Saxon, native-born American race became concerned with the prevalence and use of birth control, worried that births from these native-born Americans would quickly be eclipsed by births from immigrants and other nationalities, leading to the eventual demise of the white race in the United States. Birth control, including abortive procedures, had both positives and negatives— for instance, appropriately spacing the number of children could insure better health for both the mother and the child, but also prevented the birth of many potential Americans. However, because of this negative effect of birth control on the

development of the Anglo-Saxon, native-born population, there were many outspoken detractors to the idea of widely available reproductive technologies and information. Pain management during birth did not have the same backlash, because it seemed to unequivocally provide “a better race for future generations since upper-class women would be more likely to have babies if they could have them painlessly” (Leavitt 156), particularly as it was generally only available to or demanded by middle- and upper-class populations, who were more likely to be aligned with the desired racial outcomes of the outspoken members of the clergy and medical profession who rejected the control of fertility. Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg put this anxiety succinctly when they write:

Nowhere is this hostility toward women and the desire to inculcate guilt over women’s desire to avoid pregnancy more strikingly illustrated than in the warnings of “race suicide” so increasingly fashionable in the late-nineteenth century. A woman’s willingness and capacity to bear children was a duty she owed not only to God and husband but to her “race” as well. In the second half of the nineteenth century, articulate Americans forced to evaluate and come to emotional terms with social change became, like many of their European contemporaries, attracted to a worldview which saw racial identity and racial conflict as fundamental. And within these categories, birthrates became all-important indices to national vigor and thus social health. (“Female” 351)

This attitude is certainly prevalent throughout the late 19th century, and led eventually to major political changes, including the institution of the Comstock Laws in 1873. This particular pressure, to honor both one’s husband, God and one’s race though the process of giving birth would

have been a significant social force acting on women from their childhood, with the glorification of motherhood as a political act. While this is not necessarily in conflict with the use of birth controls, as previously addressed, it would have equated motherhood and racial purity as a central driving force in the life of any white, native-born American woman.

This insistence on motherhood as a national good was not always accepted by the woman to whom the charge was directed. John Ellis's book, *Deterioration of the Puritan Stock and Its Causes*, seeks to address this issue head on, charging women first with the sin of "tight dressing," or the use of corsets and stays to produce a small waist and more "feminine" silhouette, but which would also compress the internal organs, making the woman feeble and making it difficult to carry a child to term. "It is therefore certain that they are violating the laws of physical development and health to a far greater extent than the men. And the misfortune of our native race is, that such violations affect the unborn of both sexes, the infant and the little boys and girls, as well as the adult women" (10). After constructing a case against women's fashion as a detriment to the nation (something, it must be noted, which would be primarily desired and achieved by the population Ellis sees in decline: the middle- and upper-class, white, and native-born woman, who would be susceptible to the lure of such fashionable attire, and able to achieve the life of relative leisure that such restrictive garments would require), Ellis moves towards another problem he sees with the white, native-born female: the lack of desire to have children.

This lack of desire, he states, comes from this longing to be fashionable; one cannot attain the tiny waist lauded by fashion when one is pregnant, or as easily post-pregnancy. The pregnant female body, simply put, cannot live up to the standards set in place by the fashionable dictates of the era. One of Ellis' quotations reads:

As you say, they distort their figure and as far as they can, they unfit it for child-bearing, unconsciously perhaps. Marriage finds them unused to care or responsibility. They are not willing to assume the cares or troubles of maternity, they will not willingly endure the retirement from society and pleasure that child-bearing compels, and if they are so unfortunate as to “get int the family way,” every method is tried, and too often successfully, to produce a miscarriage, ruinous to health, and, as you know, not unfrequently [sic] causing a habit of miscarriage all through life.

Ellis goes on to say:

For a husband and wide to not desire children, is to make one of the most fearful mistakes that they can make. It is to suffocate one of the noblest affections implanted in the soul by their Creator. ... To strive to prevent conception, excepting in rare cases where from previous births it is manifest that the wife’s life will be seriously endangered either by too frequent conceptions or by another attempt to have a child, is worse than a mistake— it is to violate the command to multiply and replenish the earth. To destroy the germ after conception by deliberately bringing it to an untimely birth is a most fearful crime. This crime kills the child and always seriously endangers the life of the mother.

It is important to note in this section, and indeed throughout his work, that Ellis does not necessarily blame women for the lack of native-born births, but rather states that it is both the fault of men and women for seeking to avoid the responsibilities of children. Even when discussing women’s propensity to bind their waists, damaging their internal organs, sometimes to the point

of a prolapsed uterus or broken ribs, Ellis places equal blame on men who tell women that having such a figure is beautiful. After discussing the “mistake” of not having children, he moves on to chide men who abandon their wives, leaving them with the financial and emotional tolls of raising children alone. Even while 19th century authors such as Ellis would have argued strongly for the division of labor along gendered lines, with men and women possessing different capabilities and emotional intensities alongside their sexual organs, they did not necessarily see the issues of birth control and abortion as a specifically woman’s issue. Rather, it was, in many ways, a national issue: the issue of any man or woman who was concerned with the development and maintaining of a healthy and hearty, white, native-born population.

This equating of birth with American nationalism presented a problem, however. It created a narrative of the American self that only included a fraction of the women giving birth in the United States of America. This is the question of the immigrant mother, the Native American mother, the black mother, the quadroon and octoroon mother, the unwed mother, disabled mothers or mothers of any variety that stood removed from the sentimental ideal. It is distinctly clear in the writing of authors like Ellis and Strong that white, native-born and healthy bodies operated as the understood norm of American subjectivity, and that all others who fell outside of this population were problematic for the identity and stability of the American nation. The following section hopes to address this issue in terms of popular performance during the 19th century, specifically seen in the play *Margaret Fleming* by James Herne, wherein Herne demonstrates and develops the relationship between personhood and birth, questioning both the possibility of female agency as a mother and the limitations of sentimentalism as it is applied to various participants in the American project of nationalism.

## *Margaret Fleming*

The prevalence and power of this ideal of the white, healthy, native-born American woman as the standard for motherhood in the United States is demonstrated throughout the play *Margaret Fleming*, but it also deals with the relationship between men and women as they encounter the question of motherhood and childbirth. Likewise, several other significant themes occur, including the question of the legitimacy of motherhood: namely, who is allowed to be a mother under the idealized constructions presented in the 19th century, as well as the theme of medical intervention in the process of childbirth.

Herne had a great deal of trouble producing the play, and its opening in Lynn, Massachusetts only had three performances, starting on July 4th, 1890. Herne himself played the role of Philip Fleming, and his wife played Margaret. After the initial three performances, “no theatre manager was willing to produce such a daring play” (Quinn 268). Herne both rented auditoriums and revised the play in order to get it out to the public, but it was subjected to short runs throughout its 19th century life. The play underwent numerous revisions between 1890 and 1894, with the removal of a four year gap between acts 3 and 4, wherein Lucy, the child of Philip and Margaret, is kidnapped; Margaret loses her sanity or her memory, depending on the version; and the final scene takes place in a police station, rather than the relatively peaceful domestic environments of Mrs. Burton’s cottage and “Margaret’s home.” The final revision, which was recalled by Mrs. Herne after the manuscripts were lost in a fire, “suggests that [Herne] wished to eliminate unnecessary plot complications, theatricality, and didacticism and to intensify the psychological realism” (269). The suggestion of realism in the play, however, does not remove it entirely from the realm of melodrama and sentiment, as Anthony Kubiak discusses in his book,

*Agitated States*, where he states that the dramatic climax of the play, “is very nearly over the top for melodrama, and certainly so for Ibsenesque realism” (105). The play is full of sentiment, but its sentimental moments do more than just draw the audience into the play with the same emotional tropes that marked melodramatic plays throughout the century. The sentimental moments in the play serve to delineate the limits of personhood, calling the audience’s emotional attention to the characters who fall within the normalized, heterogenous structures of citizenship, both in terms of deviations from the Anglo-Saxon racial characteristics, and the understanding of gendered roles such as mother.

In *Margaret Fleming*, James Herne turns to the domestic interior of a well-respected businessman’s home; Philip Fleming is a successful mill owner. His wife, Margaret, has just given birth to a girl named Lucy, but Philip is troubled by the news that one of his former sexual partners, a German immigrant named Lena, is also giving birth to a child, but the labor and delivery are not going well. Additionally, he receives the news from the doctor that his wife suffers from a disease of the eyes, and that if she is placed under any undue stress she will go blind. Unbeknownst to him, his wife goes to visit his mistress, as word has spread that the mistress speaks only of Margaret and her happiness with Philip. Margaret discovers the child is Philip’s after Lena has died from childbirth. Left alone with the crying infant, Margaret performs an action which shocked the audiences: she nurses Lena’s child onstage (Quinn 270). When she returns home, she confronts her husband and goes blind. After the confrontation, Philip disappears for a week, and returns to find that Margaret has taken in the illegitimate child and has been breastfeeding the infant alongside Lucy. The play ends with a terse reconciliation of husband and wife,

the promise of rebuilding both love and social honor, as well as the acceptance of the illegitimate son into their home.

Blood in this play is far more symbolic within the domestic formality of the Fleming's home than in the melodramatically violent landscape of *The Octoroon*, in keeping with the play's turn towards realism. However, the play is not void of actual blood, contained within the ailing body of Margaret and the pregnant body of Lena, threatening to sicken her to death. Indeed, the play is marked by the medicinal, and both of the primary women in the play, Margaret Fleming, the wife, and Lena, the mistress, are perpetually interacting with the doctor, subjected to tests, remedies, and treatment throughout the play. Controversial in scope, the play received a great deal of criticism, for several reasons, which included the unseemly subject matter of sexual affairs, illegitimate children and illness; the focus on psychological depth and arc of character in contrast to the melodrama of the previous decade; and the notorious nursing scene (Quinn 269). The play points towards the fact that while American drama was transitioning in this period towards a more modernist form, moving away from the melodrama of *The Octoroon*, the same anxiety over social position, individual and collective identity, and the denial and bestowing of personhood had taken root deep within the enduring American performance landscape, not to mention the use of sentimentality to produce affect within the audience (Kubiak 106).

In the United States of America, particularly during the late nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual, American-born males were granted the power of choice over the lives of those who fell outside of normative definitions, whether through gender, sexual preference, race or immigration status. The female body, evidenced in both Margaret Fleming and Lena in *Margaret Fleming*, and the body of the slave and Native American, seen in the characters of Zoe and



Wahnotee respectively, in *The Octoroon*, are all bodies which fall under the control of privileged males throughout the plot of these plays, even though they are most often woefully inept at solving the dramatic problems presented to them. In *Margaret Fleming*, Margaret's husband Philip is the primary protagonist, and the story traces his character arc as he deals with the consequences of his moral shortcomings. Presented as a now-moral man whose past life is catching up to him, the audience cannot help but maintain some sympathy for the downtrodden Philip, who, from the opening scene, cares for his employees, his wife, and his prospects. Described as "a well dressed, prosperous, happy-looking man about thirty-five," he fits neatly into the traditional role of tragic hero, a good man whose tragic flaw, in this case womanizing, has caused pain and sorrow, but who can only find himself at the mercy of fate (Herne 274). The primary conflict of the play arises from his internal conflict over the troubled birth of his illegitimate child and the feared loss of his wife's affections. Throughout the play, Philip is positioned as a full member of society, a "social insider," capable of action and available to the consequences and possibilities of privileged personhood, a man whose troubles and eventual reconciliation with his wife only serve to affirm his standing as a functioning member of society.

One of the most intriguing questions of the play, for the modern reader, is the way in which the play presents the women characters, constantly redirecting the attention of the play back to the primary male protagonist and his troubles. In a play named for the female lead, her presence is often presented as a kind of empathetic void, wherein her actions are determined by either the men in her life or her social circumstances. Philip's mistress, in the same way, functions as a complete void in the play: she is never seen, and is always offstage, perpetually in the

process of giving birth and dying. In an impassioned moment, Doctor Larkin, Philip's friend and a member of the same social class, proclaims, speaking of Philip's mistress:

. . . The girl's not to blame. She's a product of her environment. Under present social conditions, she'd probably have gone wrong anyhow. But you! God Almighty! If we can't look for decency in men like you-- representative men,--- where in God's name are we to look for it, I'd like to know?

Philip: If my wife hears of this my home will be ruined.

Doctor: (scornfully) Your home! Your home! It is just such damn scoundrels as you that make and destroy homes! (Herne 281)

This insistence on the significance of Philip Fleming's social position places him as a member of the social elite, who not only experience a comparative lack of repercussions for deviant actions, but who also can determine the personhood of others, for instance, the child who is born to his mistress Lena. Lena herself is constructed as a mere "product of her environment" in this moment, which removes her from the possibilities of subversion or agency. In contrast, Philip is both blamed and excused for his actions, chided by the doctor, but receiving little else in terms of social repercussions, fully claiming the privilege of his personhood and social standing as a "representative man." He is, in many ways, the one who is granted the possibility of conferring personhood on Lena, and his reticence to claim her and her child illustrates the control of a population that rejected illegitimacy and sexual relationships outside of marriage. Philip is wracked with the question of the child and contemplates what is to be done with him: should he take the child into his home and confer on him the rights of personhood as an heir, or should he reject the child as illegitimate and deny the child personhood, casting the child as a social outsider and sub-

ject to control within the state system? Conflated with this question is the mother's role as a German immigrant, which, even in the early American mind, relegates Lena even further into the position of social outsider, giving Philip pause when it comes to legitimizing the child alongside his own daughter.

His wife and mistress however, as women, occupy a very different social position than even the male child. This is most clearly evidenced in their interactions with the character of Doctor Larkin, who is constantly examining their bodies, relegating them under both his control and the control of Philip Fleming, with whom he is in constant communication about the various illnesses and maladies of the two women. Mary Douglas, in her book *Purity and Danger*, directs attention toward the danger of such moments of liminal, abject humanity: "It is obvious that death and childbirth should be a matter of concern" (81-82). And the men in the play are certainly concerned: Margaret is examined many times throughout the course of the play, but has little knowledge of what her ailment is, as the Doctor Larkin is only willing to describe it to her husband: "She has magnificent eyes, but, her child is the indirect cause of the development of an inherent weakness in them . . . Conditions incident to motherhood. Shock. She is showing slight symptoms now that if aggravated would cause serious complications" (Herne 293). Motherhood, and indeed the capability of motherhood itself, seems to present a condition of the human body which is one of perpetual frailty. Not only does it cause blindness in Margaret's case and death in Lena's, it presents a vision of the body as that which is perpetually penetrable, open to the dissolution of boundaries from the moment of the sexual act to the activity of breast-feeding. The sexual necessity of penetration, the biological processes of gestation, pregnancy and birth, the activity of nursing: each of these cause an anxiety for the men in the play, (and indeed, the shocked

audience of the original production) who seek to control the bodies of these women through medical intervention into the feminine “messiness” of childbirth.

The anxiety over the female body as a fertile possibility, rooted deeply within a metaphorical language of the land as feminine created a deep concern with the masculine control over the purity of American feminine identity, exhibited through an anxiety over penetration of borders by the foreign, the social outsider, and the land/woman’s own tendency towards a lack of civility. Anne McClintock explores relationship between land and the exoticised female body at length in her book, *Imperial Leather*. She writes, “Sexuality as a trope for other power relations was certainly an abiding aspect of imperial power. The feminizing of the ‘virgin’ land . . . Operated as a metaphor for relations that were often not about sexuality at all, or were only indirectly sexual” (14). I would argue, that within the context of this play, the opposite proves true as well: the sexual relationship of husband and wife/husband and husband/mistress, becomes a relation of power, activated by the same metaphorical landscape of frontier and domination. The white, heterosexual, American-born male was the only one who could institute and maintain social order and civility against the leaky and wild tendencies of both the American landscape and the female body, particularly in the liminal moment of her transition in to motherhood. In this way, the white, heterosexual, American-born male instituted a sense of American identity which was marked by the necessity of individualism, rejecting any dependence which could collapse the borders of a contained social identity. It also created the necessity of controlling that which remained both necessary and yet threatening to the American masculine mind: the body of the American woman. This tendency illustrates a development in the processes of power, especially as it is transferred away from the European form of sovereign power into the distinct social land-

scape of the United States of America. While it is certainly overly-reductive to reduce all members of society aside from the Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual, American-born male to a social status as “less than person,” denying them ultimate agency and powers of subversion, it is significant to note how these tendencies developed alongside the performative practice of theatre within American culture, particularly in a play which is considered the advent of modern drama in the United States.

Sentiment in this play can be a useful tool here: the first, and most readily assumed purpose of sentiment, serves to bond the audience to the various characters, causing them to be emotionally attached to their plight. The further use of sentiment, however, allows the reader to distinguish between those characters who deserve the sympathetic emotion of the audience and those who do not. As Herne purposefully constructed the sentimental aspects of the performance, he formulated the connections the audience would make with the various characters. Margaret and Lena would certainly hold a great deal of the audience’s sympathies due to their lack of available agency in the face of terrible misfortunes— Margaret gives birth, discovers her husband’s infidelity, goes blind, and makes the choice to take in her husband’s child, while Lena merely gives birth and dies without appearing onstage at all. Philip, on the other hand, carries a great deal of blame for the events that occur, and his agency in the matter would make him less likely to gather the audience’s sympathies. However, this is not necessarily how the play functions: through Herne’s focus on Philip, his journey towards reconciliation with his wife, and the framing lens of Philip as the primary protagonist, the audience’s sympathies could certainly rest with him, hoping for forgiveness to be extended to him from his wife. Philip, though impure through his deeds, still remains ultimately pure through the perception of his very identity. This

is clearly evidenced by the multiple revisions the play underwent, wherein Herne finally settled on Margaret's forgiveness as the only suitable outcome, and indeed, the only outcome the audience would accept. Herne, in the play, while challenging the boundaries of sentiment through its application to the characters of both Margaret and Lena, does not ultimately use sentiment to challenge the audience's notion of subjectivity, given his focus on the character of Philip as the primary protagonist. The sentimental aspects of both Margaret and Lena serve to provide the audience with a sense of interest and investment in the play, but does not ultimately challenge their understanding of the hierarchies of personhood. Judith L. Stephens points towards the lack in Margaret's character, confining her, and the play, to the "dominant gender ideology":

Margaret appeared to be a new type of heroine because her character seemed to determine the events of the play instead of being manipulated by the plot, but by confining her power to moral influence, the drama reinforces dominant gender ideology and takes away with one hand what it gives with the other. (50)

This ambiguity, leading to an affirmation of the gendered norms of marriage and childbirth, was a source of criticism of the play, and particularly Margaret's character. One New York Times review, written in 1891, stated that, "The character of Margaret is strongly drawn, but if she is a logical personage, she is certainly a disagreeable one" (Quinn 270). This criticism points towards the failed ambiguity of Margaret's character; rather than promote a new use of the sentimental aspect that would allow for a changing social performance, Margaret is relegated to the audience's preconceived notions of gender relations.

At the end of the play, during the moment of reconciliation between Margaret and Philip Fleming, Margaret exhibits a profound, but ultimately unsuccessful, moment of social agency.

She, now blind from the stress of her prior confrontation with her husband, speaks out to him, saying: “(brokenly) There! You see! You are a man, and you have your ideas of -- the-- sanctity-- of-- the thing you love. Well, I am a woman-- and perhaps-- I, too, have the same ideals. I don’t know. But, I, too, cry ‘pollution’” (311). This single exclamation, “pollution,” set within the context of the masculine/feminine anxieties of social standing present a brief moment of upheaval to the assumptive structures of control. Men, too, can be pollution or polluted, men too can suffer the force of penetration, the “dirtying” effect of social contagion. While Philip can be forgiven for his tryst with Lena, he risks pollution, contamination from the body of the other woman; even though Lena is far from his first affair, it is the first his wife has discovered and for which has condemned him. However, it is, perhaps, a little too late, and rather than turning the table on gender structures, this exclamation merely serves to reaffirm the fear deep within the mind of the American male: they too must guard their own bodies and minds against the “uncivilized” influence of women/the wilderness, lest they fall into the profound social pollution, being cast out as social outsiders. The only truly safe relationship is the contained control over the wife within the marriage relationship. Philip’s fall from grace in the eyes of his community and his wife, however, as the fall of any great tragic hero, is a great deal further for a prosperous man such as Philip than the fall of a poor German immigrant or even a prosperous man’s wife. And, in the true optimistic spirit of the age of expansion and plenty, Philip has already been promised reconciliation and will suffer only the merest social humiliation, bolstered on by his loving wife’s sympathies and the audience’s empathetic hopes.

Margaret, in this play, is considered a nearly perfect manifestation of the pure woman. She has fulfilled each role laid out in front of her, standing as the idealized wife and mother. In

her role as wife, she is willing to forgive her husband his multiple transgressions in favor of maintaining her marriage. As a mother, she is capable of nurturing not only her own child, but her husband's child as well. She remains faithful to both her husband and her child(ren), putting their needs ahead of her own throughout the play. In many ways, she has no other options available to her. Without the available roles of mother and child, Margaret literally has no recourse: she is, even after her husband's disappearance, reliant on his economic viability to support both her and the children. Margaret is confined within the perception of purity, exhibited in her roles as wife and mother: any step outside of this would vanquish her from any form of respectability. In this way, the ultimate agency in the play continually resides with Philip, as he chooses whether or not to return to his wife. The act of Margaret's forgiveness of her husband, in many ways, is entirely necessary, as it is merely the continuation of the roles she is already constructed within.

In *Margaret Fleming*, what Philip fears from his social and sexual indiscretion is more difficult to parse. In many ways, he fears the loss of his identity itself; he is a capable businessman, a loving husband and father. Each of these social formations could be lost following the revelation of his sexual deviance from normative marital assumptions, and it is clear that this profoundly affects his actions in the play. However, it is worth noting the intricate connection which exists between the social milieu of the nineteenth-century, the identity of the American subject, and the process of commodification which empowers and instigates the interactions between the character and his or her environment. Rather than loyalty to a person whose life supersedes one's own, the American governmental landscape necessitates deferment of one's social position to other structures of control, in this case the myth of social mobility through economic



gain. If one's ability to maintain control is predicated on social inclusion and formations of personhood, personhood and social inclusion are predicated on capital.

In the opening scene of *Margaret Fleming* we see Philip Fleming conducting his business affairs, negotiating not only major business investments for his company, but also exhorting an office boy to save money for a bicycle, lamenting cash flow difficulties, and calculating the cost of repairs on his machines; before we know anything else about him we know his social identity as a savvy and involved businessman. His multiple transactions are cut short by a street peddler, a man whose identity is also consolidated into the necessities of buying and selling. He enters and shifts the conversation to Philip's other possibilities for identification, namely, Philip's role as husband and father, and several pages into the script we are finally made aware of the characters who the rest of the plot will revolve around. However, these interactions with wife and child are not free from the constraints of capital. Philip, in desperation to show his affection for his wife in light of his affair coming to life, drafts an account for her "by deposit, May 3, 1890, \$5,000. Five thousand dollars!" and a "certificate for \$20,000 worth of United States bonds, maturing in 1930" for his daughter Lucy (287). This action conflates his role as husband and provider with his economic output, placing an actual price tag on his affection for his wife, and reconfiguring her forgiveness as an economic transaction. In this way, Philip's identity, time and again, is conflated with his capitalistic possibilities, specifically his economic viability. If he loses his wife, his loss of social capital will condemn him to the life of the impoverished peddler we saw in the opening scene, making the stakes far more than personal.

With this process occurring in the play, a significant shift happens to the character of Margaret herself. Her relationship with her husband becomes, in the end, a matter of capitalistic

exchange, wherein both of them are defined by their role in a libidinal economy of marital exchange, as well as her value as a mother to the two infants. Relegated to the position of wife and mother, she is no longer allowed participation as subject in the capitalist economy, but is reduced to the sole dramatic possibility of forgiveness at the end, fulfilling her wifely duty of caring not only for her own child, but also the child of her husband's mistress. While she appears to have a moment of independence during the confrontation scene, she remains dependent on her husband's economic status and the concern given her from the male doctor. In this way, *Margaret Fleming* serves to affirm the role of women as economic commodities through their fertile potential, using their subsumption in the capitalistic process of early America to exert control over the dangerous female body. Again, capitalist structures that move the women into motherhood as a sole possibility are used to attempt the transition of the woman from the processes of abjection into status as object: as a fertile object, she is forbidden the agency that even the abject being would hold. In the play, Margaret's biological processes are highlighted, and her ability to breast-feed is more important than her sight: she is relegated into the role of mother, blind to any other possibility.

This play demonstrates the affects of sentiment as it works within the melodramatic realm, creating characters who must necessarily inhabit the "programmatic" possibilities of their gender and race. However, the melodramatic impulse, particularly as it relates to the role of motherhood, is far from confined to the performative stage of the late 19th century. After looking at the contextual and performance history of birth control and abortion, as well as the way that motherhood is treated and understood in the historical past in the United States, it becomes clear that the contemporary understanding of these issues owes a great deal to the foundation laid by

19th century Americans. In the final section of this chapter, I hope to address the ways in which our historical past informs and constructs our modern understanding of birth control use and the process of becoming-mother, particularly in terms of the relation of these issues to the Evangelical church. The connection between birth control, abortion and the Evangelical church is not an accidental or incidental one, but rather, is a long history which circulates around the same impulses of growing and maintaining appropriate gender and racial identities, working to make birth an idealized culmination of a woman's process of obtaining purity, and developing a systemic displacement of the rights of a woman to control her own narrative of birth and motherhood. Examining at each of these factors independently produces an understanding of the contemporary political brouhaha over abortion rights and birth control availability, one which places the Evangelical position firmly in line with the perpetual drive throughout American history to establish a patriotic identity. Looking first at the most extreme examples of the Evangelical perception of reproductive rights and then bringing the discussion towards the more moderate Evangelical understanding of the issue, I hope to highlight the issues at stake— both personal and political— within the issue of reproductive rights in the mind of the Evangelical, particularly in light of the ever-present 19th century context.

### **The Quiverfull Movement**

In terms of speaking about the role of birth control and abortion in the United States in an Evangelical context, one particular segment of the Evangelical church comes under discussion as, perhaps, one of the more extreme situations regarding this debate. The Quiverfull movement is practiced by some conservative Evangelicals, who forego any form of birth or reproductive control, including natural family planning, withdraw, or sterilization procedures. Generally

speaking, any sexual activity that could not result in the conception of a child is considered “perverted,” directing attention to biblical passages such as Psalms 127:3-5: “Children are a heritage from the Lord, / Offspring a reward from him. / Like arrows in the hands of a warrior / are children born in one’s youth. / Blessed is the man / whose quiver is full of them. / They will not be put to shame / when they contend with their opponents” and Genesis 9:7, which commands “be fruitful and multiply.” Occasionally called natalists, or pro-natalists, adherents of the Quiverfull movement also often firmly believe in homeschooling their children and in strong “family organization” which includes complementarianism. Complementarianism, as understood by the Quiverfull movement, is when family roles are decided along gendered lines, with the male as the head of the household, citing biblical passages like 1 Peter 3:1: “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your husbands” and Ephesians 5:22-23: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is also the head of the church.” While it is difficult to know how many families fall within the Quiverfull designation, the movement is at least several thousand strong in the United States, and considered to be growing (Mesaros-Winckles).

Several books highlight the Quiverfull position on marriage, family organization, giving birth, and child rearing. Generally speaking, these books seem to follow a similar pattern, each using an affective strategy for convincing the reader of the dangers of reproductive control and the ultimate goodness of large, hierarchically-organized families. In Mary Pride’s book, *The Way Home: Beyond Feminism, Back to Reality*, Pride spends a chapter vilifying the common forms of contraceptive currently used. She points out the danger of the pill, directing attention, for example, to the idea that birth defects are caused by hormonal birth control, as well as creating the in-

creased risk of hypertension, blood clotting, diabetes, fungal infections, and cervical cancers. She points out that “thanks to the Pill even totally monogamous couples can now get venereal disease,” citing *candida*, which is commonly known as a yeast infection (53). She similarly seeks to debunk the efficacy of an IUD, stating that the “dissected womb” can be “overgrown,... eroded, ... dead and dying” with “blood loss doubled as a consequence,” and subject to “perforation and infection.” “The device does not become safer or more effective the longer it is left in,” and “the increased risk of pelvic inflammatory disease is now so generally recognized ... that each device carry a warning on the packet” (54-5). She then makes the overarching statement that “other contraceptive methods, while less hazardous to the Pill and the IUD, are medically counterproductive in that they make the sex act to some degree ludicrous or unpleasant” (55). She includes in this statement the diaphragm, condoms, spermicides, and *coitus interruptus*, which she calls “kinky sex.” She equates these practices with homosexual sex, citing the spread of AIDS, saying that these forms of “kinky sex” “make the body prey to a variety of of infectious diseases, and can even break down the immune defenses entirely” (56).

These statements, which are aimed to undermine both the efficacy and the usefulness of common birth control methods, all direct attention to Pride’s main point: “mothers get pregnant to beget new Christians. Even if maternal missionary work has some hazards, the noble way is to face them with courage” (57). In Pride’s estimation, the risks associated with numerous, sequential pregnancies is presented as negligible compared to the risk of not being pregnant; birth control is, according to her, incredibly damaging and dangerous, but the risk of not obeying God’s mandate to have children is even worse. Pride then moves on to discuss the appropriate roles of the members of the household, speaking mostly to women, encouraging them to become house-

wives restricted to the domestic sphere, homeschooling their children in order to stand against the “bad idea” of public education (89). “Next, we have to turn from our ‘wicked ways’ to *good* ways. This means coming back to homeworking” (211). She discusses the “myth” of overpopulation, the need for children to be raised “without confusion” of multiple viewpoints, and the fulfillment of becoming a stay at home mother. She makes it very clear that “Christian women who voluntarily leave the home, refusing to serve the Lord... are setting up the conditions for female enslavement in our own country” (162). Pride’s adamant position, which seems extreme when taken out of the contextual understanding of both Evangelical culture and the larger history of maternal role in the United States, points towards the aggressive, internalized insistence on complementarianism as a deep and abiding trope within Evangelical culture.

Other books make similar claims: in *Letting God Plan Your Family*, author Owen Samuel also speaks about the dangers of contraceptive devices and spends a good deal of time addressing overpopulation, finally coming to the conclusion that overpopulation is not a problem, rather “the true problem... is sinful humanity” (98). In *Be Fruitful and Multiply*, Nancy Campbell points directly to the goal of having many children, saying that, “In the context of Bible days, arrows were for the purpose of war! We are in a war today, and God needs arrows for his army. God wants children to be born to fulfill his strategies and plans. ... The more arrows a warrior had ... the more weapons he had to slay the enemy” (79). Books like *Family UNplanning* and *The Family: God’s Weapons for Victory* all arrive at the same conclusions, making similar claims about the “myth” of overpopulation, the rampant dangers of birth control, the need to release reproductive control into the will of God despite medical danger or less than ideal situations for

rearing children, the woman's role within the home, the need for homeschooling, and the militaristic equating of children with weapons to be used against "the enemy."

Reactions to the Quiverfull movement in the United States are extremely mixed, particularly within the community of Evangelicals themselves, ranging from open mockery of the choices of the Quiverfull adherents to outright support, or in most cases, a kind of complicit silence. The most obvious example of a Quiverfull family has recently come into public scrutiny in the Duggar family, who have a show on the The Learning Channel (TLC) network titled, "19 Kids and Counting." The show first aired as a special in 2004, titled "14 Children and Pregnant Again," and has made the Duggars the "unofficial spokespeople of the Quiverfull movement" (Mesaros-Winckles). While certainly not all Quiverfull families have as many as 19 children, the Duggars provide an extreme example of an extreme movement, and have brought knowledge of the Quiverfull movement to light within American society. But more than that, they have also brought acceptance of the patriarchal lifestyle to mainstream United States, as Christy Mesaros-Winckles points out in her reading of the television show. She states:

*19 and Counting* plays into normative gender roles in the United States. The show only exemplifies Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar as a loving couple, devoted to their family. As the show has progressed since its first season the loving nature of the family unit is the central theme while the religious convictions influencing their lifestyle are rarely discussed. Thus, *19 and Counting* presents a subversive oppositional discourse that implicitly argues that large families where the women are relegated to purely domestic functions are acceptable.

This is a significant observation, but it begs another question, particularly when one situates families such as the Duggars in a historical context. While it certainly seems that TLC's filming and format promote a view of the Duggars as a likable, loving family, the extremeness of their familial situation must also be readily available within the narrative of American life in order to perpetuate the "wholesomeness" of a family in which the father chooses when and how their daughters will marry, and forbids them any physical contact with suitors prior to engagement when holding hands is deemed acceptable (Savage).

When seen in context of American racial histories, the Duggars, I posit, are nothing new, but merely a condensed example of the mythopoetic narrative structure already set in motion from the inception of the United States, one which places purity of the sexual and racial body as a primary goal. Laura Harrison and Sarah B. Rowley, in their article titled "Babies by the Bundle: Gender, Backlash, and the Quiverfull Movement," provide a thorough look at the many manifestations of the Quiverfull movement, particularly as it relates to the rights of women and their lack of agency and choice within the Quiverfull familial formation. They address the "modern" nature of the Quiverfull movement, including the ways in which adherents engage with one another through internet technology, television, and other modern cultural artifacts, representing themselves as a viable and wholesome choice within contemporary society. They state, "Quiverfull cannot be adequately described as a process of reinterpreting or abandoning tradition, but rather as *rearticulating* modernity through the manipulation of traditional gender roles and sexuality and engagement with technology" (65). The movement works hard through its use of rhetoric and cultural signifiers to promote its normalcy, which, in many ways, functions as a small example of the wider Evangelical church's reliance on cultural tropes and signifiers to cre-



ate a sense of appropriateness, wholesomeness, and relevancy within larger American society. As Vyckie Garrison, a former member of the Quiverfull movement bluntly states, “[T]he Quiverfull movement is regular Christianity lived out to its logical conclusions” (“Born to Breed”).

However, this type of insistence on cultural relevancy tends to mask the more insidious beliefs promoted by the Quiverfull movement, which include women’s total submission to the male head of the household and a subsumption of women’s agency into the agency of her husband or God, particularly concerning birth and labor. “The anti-individualism, aimed at women, and the reconceptualization of choice constitute the main ways that the movement undermines the power of feminist rhetoric” (Harrison 62). Labor and birth are considered necessarily painful within the rhetoric of “female bodily sacrifice,” wherein the mother is ultimately willing to sacrifice her health and wellbeing for the delivery of children.

Women’s sacrifice, as demanded by God, is central to Quiverfull ideology: it provides the foundation for common narratives among members— particularly women— of the imagined community, justifies Quiverfull’s pro-natalist injunction that women relinquish individual control over fertility in the service of a greater cause (in this case, religious) and serves as the basis for the movement’s anti-feminist message. (57)

This lack of agency often has real results, with women undergoing risky pregnancies late into life, with possible troublesome outcomes placed into God’s hands through prayer. Children could suffer as well, as having another child within a year of a prior pregnancy can cause an increased risk of placental abruption, placenta previa, autism, low birth weight, small gestational size, and preterm birth (“Family Planning”). However, within the Quiverfull’s insistence on God’s plan-

ning, rather than the use of reproductive technologies, these risks are assumed and celebrated as opportunities for God's will to unfold.

While the Quiverfull movement may be construed as a far fringe element of the Evangelical church, its emphasis on cultural relevance, its development and growth, and the political involvement of its members prevent it from being entirely dismissed as irrelevant to modern American society. Many members of the Quiverfull movement are very politically involved, promoting anti-abortion and anti-birth control agendas. This idea is called "political domination," or, in more common terms, the establishment of the United States as a truly theocratic state. This is justified under the same biblical passages that present children as "arrows" to be used against one's "enemies." For instance:

[W]e have Doug Phillips (president of Vision Forum Ministries, and son of Howard Phillips) urging Christians at the San Antonio Tea Party rally to "honor our fathers" (he's talking about patriarchy), Congressman Dan Webster (R-FL) promoting male headship at Gothard's Advance Training Institute conference, Mike Huckabee stating that he wishes every American could be forced at gunpoint to listen to David Barton's Christian Reconstruction messages, the Family Research Council's Values Voters Summit bestowing the "Pro-Family Entertainment Award" on Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar, etc. The entanglement of Quiverfull leaders with right wing politics is huge. ("Born to Breed")

In fact, Michelle Duggar herself, in December of 2014, recorded a call which went out to voters in Fayetteville, Arkansas, which urged citizens to overturn Ordinance 119, an ordinance which allows for non-discrimination of peoples based on gender or sexuality. She stated in the call that,

the ordinance “would allow ‘males with past child predator convictions that claim they are females to have a legal right to enter private areas that are reserved for women and girls’” (“Arkansas Town”). The ordinance was repealed, either because of her telephone call or the Duggar’s money, upwards of \$30,000, donated towards campaigns which favored repealing the ordinance. While it may seem that this is a single family’s desire to influence the political climate of their town according to their own personal belief system, the Duggars are, in fact, enacting the Quiverfull mandate to establish a political theocracy that aligns with their own personal beliefs.

This profound emphasis on political domination walks hand in hand with the emphasis on giving birth, for the exact same reasons as the Anglo-Saxon, native-born population of the 19th century was concerned with a woman’s fertile potential. Simply put, the more children a family has, the more they can, quite literally, outbreed their enemies— the “godless, liberal, lesbian feminists” (“Born to Breed”) in the case of the modern Quiverfull movement, and “a mass of men but little acquainted with our institutions who will act in concert and who are controlled largely by their appetites and prejudices” in the case of just a little over a century prior (Strong 43). As the Quiverfull movement seeks to gain and birth followers, what they are truly hoping for has not changed: a white, native-born and theistic nation, wherein headship and authority necessarily fall to the male leader, by virtue of the woman’s biological capabilities of giving birth. The reason that Quiverfull families, such as the Duggars, are accepted into American culture with open arms is simply because their political desires have never deviated from the desires of Americans since the late 19th century; these families are merely recreating the mythos of the wholesome American family— white, patriarchal, and focused on eradicating those who are unsavory to them— for a modern audience.

These two moments in American culture, exhibited by the Quiverfull movement and the 19th century's emphasis on medicalizing birth, manifest themselves in very similar ways: concern with the ability to have more (or in the case of the 19th century, healthier) children, drawing the connection between motherhood and the political implications of bearing and rearing the "appropriate" type of child— be it a child who adheres to Quiverfull doctrine, or who merely conforms to the desired racial characteristics— and the creation of control over women's bodies necessary to accomplish the task of overpopulating the other through both cultural insistence and a terse relationship with the medical profession. While the Quiverfull movement may indeed be an extreme example of the relationship between giving birth and its political implications, this reality does not fade when it is applied to the more moderate instances of Evangelical culture and its stance on the subject of birth control, women's bodies, and the glorification of motherhood to the detriment of women's agency.

### **A Mythopoetics of Birth**

Moderate Evangelicals have a variety of reactions to movements like Quiverfull, as well as a variety of responses to the question of birth control and abortion procedures. A large majority of Evangelicals would certainly ascribe to a traditional pro-life stance, claiming that life begins at the moment of conception, and that reproductive technologies that are considered to have abortive properties should be avoided, including the "morning-after" pill and the IUD. However, there are certainly outliers to this viewpoint, including Evangelicals who would consider abortions under varying circumstances, such as when the health of the mother is at stake, or in the case of rape or incest, even while ascribing themselves within the Evangelical fold. This variability is extended even further when one looks at the issue of birth control, which both embraced

and rejected by various members of the Evangelical church. Most often, it appears, that in all but the most extreme cases, the issue of birth control is rarely, if ever, discussed, as church leaders leave the complicated issue to the discretion of the individual or their family. In this section, I hope to look at the more moderate beliefs held by Evangelicals concerning abortion and birth control, and what these views say about the relationship between the predominantly white, middle-class population that composes the Evangelical church and the historically excluded populations that are, and have been, the object of Evangelical discrimination, either through racial bias or policies which are remnants of an America which was, or is, soundly focused on growing the white, native-born and, ultimately, theistic population. While these views differ wildly across the various populations of Evangelicals, often even differing between individuals in a single church, there is a powerful rhetorical force set in place within the language of the church, constructing women within the mythopoetics of idealism.

While moderate Evangelical beliefs about birth control and abortion are more attuned to the agency of women than the more extreme Quiverfull movement, the narratives of birth within the church serve to construct women within a structure of idealist fantasy, perpetrated by the very gospel message itself. For instance, looking at a single word, *birth*, presents an example of how the Evangelical church both confines women within a rhetorical landscape of idealism, and then works to remove the physical body from the linguistic understanding. In the Bible, birth is iterated over and over as a powerful and significant metaphor, one which is repeated and returned to throughout the church calendar. The Virgin Mary gives birth to Jesus Christ, an action repeated and performed countless times in pageants and celebrations of Christmas, “the body of the Virgin Mary does not die, but moves from one spatiality to another within the same time...” (Kristeva

17). The believer herself is “born-again” into new life in Christ, a birth symbolically repeated and represented in the sacrament of baptism, a central action in the sacred life of the believer. Birth is repeated again at the celebration of Easter, when the narrative of Christ’s resurrection from the dead is compounded with the iconography of Spring: chicks, eggs, rabbits, and flowers all promise again the hope of re-birth as a seasonal occurrence. Truly, each of the major holidays of the Evangelical year center around the idea of birth, as do each of the significant moments of the individual’s sacred journey: “Dead to sin, alive in Christ” becomes a particularly important mantra of the Christian believer. Birth is presented as a pervasive symbol of hope, blessing, new beginnings, and also the desire for permanence and continuity within the Evangelical church itself. Even the reality of bringing children into the world and rearing them in the church is celebrated as a utopic means of growing the Evangelical movement, creating a next generation of children who are willing to follow the Evangelical call. Through the use of linguistic shortcuts such as this, women’s position as the bearer of children is returned to repeatedly, tying the female body to the cyclical repetition of church holidays and celebrations. The use of cyclical time and repetition is perpetuated as uniquely female, innately constructed as inherent to the female body and its reproductive possibilities.

However, the primary function of this use of rhetoric of cyclical time seems to, rather than inhabit the actuality of embodied rhythms present in the experience of women, divorce the physical experiences of biological necessity from the language used to describe it, co-opting the language into a mystical, utopic realm of spiritual resurrection and perpetually glossy idealization of birth and rebirth. Rather than address the pain and difficulty inherent in the biological functions of pregnancy and childbirth, as Jane M. Ussher speaks of in her book, *Managing the*

*Monstrous Feminine*, the role of female biologically embodied reality is transferred into a realm of surveillance and control. The control of the “monstrous feminine” Ussher speaks of functions in society at large, but with a particular intensity within the Evangelical milieu, particularly as the woman is relegated to the sentimental understanding of her own physicality and biological processes. Not only is the body of the woman regarded with a particular fear and unknowability, it also is sanitized and reconstructed through Evangelical language, leaving the embodied Evangelical woman without a functional link between the language of birth and the reality of embodied femininity.

The word “birth” is one example of this trend, but it is not the only one: consider the word “blood” as well, or the word “virgin,” each of which has sacred significance in the Evangelical linguistic canon and a vastly different meaning when applied to embodied feminine experience. A vast amount of work has been done on the way in which the glorification of femininity within religious structures leads to the dichotomizing of women into virgins or whores, but beyond this, the sanctification of blood, of birth, and perhaps most significantly, the act of sex itself, forbids women any sort of encounter with the messy, porous, leaky reality of the body within language. Ussher’s work directs attention to the link between pathologizing through language and the need to control the biological functions of the feminine, to the point where the female body is under surveillance both from external forces, and an internal desire to self-surveil.

Stemming the discussion of the fecund body from a lineage which includes Mary Douglas and Judith Butler, Ussher speaks about the permeability of the female body, which moves it into the realm of the abject. In a society such as the Evangelical church, which is already constantly and consistently concerned with the maintenance and protection of social and cultural

boundaries, the female body is rhetorically appropriated into the “acceptable” discourse of redemption and rebirth as a means of providing psychological barriers against the fear of a permeable and contaminating other. This form of control has been a fixture of the church since St. Augustine, who “preached that woman could only pass into the kingdom of Heaven through her body being cleansed, and her spiritual self literally separated from those organs which were connected to sexual intercourse and child rearing. ... The only way for a woman to remain truly spiritual and rational, Augustine declared, was for her to remain a virgin” (Ussher 14-15). Augustine’s injunction, combined with the powerful pressure to procreate within the church, not to mention the innate biological desire for intercourse, creates a profound disconnect between the idealized requirements of the church and the lived experience of womanhood. A woman’s biological rhythms are divorced from the reality of femininity and are used by the church to foster a sense of temporal separation from the secular world, but also constructing a woman’s body as always-already impure, simply by nature of its reproductive capabilities and inability to access the futurity-focused masculine temporality. The symbolism and meaning of female reproductive possibility within the Evangelical church moves far from the embodied reality of the female body and the capability it holds to create and sustain new life, and is relegated to the landscape of the mythopoetic, instituting the need to control the actual body of the woman.

While this is undoubtedly a component of Evangelical language, formulating the experience of actual women, the way this plays out within the political and private realms of birth control and abortion restriction has continued to develop in the United States, particularly within recent lobbying for legislation that restricts the accessibility of birth control, birth control information and abortion procedures, as well as information to aid safe sexual practice. Recent Supreme



Court rulings in favor of Hobby Lobby and Wheaton College, who both sought out religious exemptions for providing female employees with birth control, point towards the relevance of these issues within a current political landscape. While the impact of these rulings can be endlessly debated by the various media, it is overwhelmingly clear that this is not a new or particularly novel moment in the birth control debates: the Evangelical relationship with birth control and abortion have been, throughout the history of the United States, at odds with the agency of women. The United State's tenuous relationship with religion has, time and again, been placed before the courts, particularly when it comes to the question of women's agency over their own bodies; from the 19th century's Comstock Laws to the 2014 Supreme Court contraception-mandate decisions, Evangelicals have sought to live out their convictions through legal means.

Motherhood in the United States clearly carries with it a profound expectations and political heft, and has throughout the history of the country. Beginning from America's origins as a uniquely imperialistic state, focused on the expansion of its own borders and the development of a uniquely American identity, the process of giving birth and having children has been compounded with the growth of the population of citizens who are willing to undertake the American identity and cause. While this has been a significant component of the way women in the United States are provided or denied agency since the 19th century, the cultural insistence of Evangelicalism in the United States has compounded the rhetorical and literal potential of women's ability to give birth. One aspect which cannot be neglected in terms of this is the way in which the politicalization and idealization of motherhood works within a racialized understanding of who can, and should, give birth.

Motherhood within the United States, traditionally, has been idealized only within the common understanding of the normalized position of the white woman's body. Within the 19th century, a clear emphasis is placed on white, native-born women giving birth in order to facilitate the stability and development of whiteness within the country. In contemporary Evangelical terms, motherhood is compounded with the idea of growing a population of Evangelicals, who are, again, predominantly understood as normalized white and native-born. The enforcement of legislation which prevents or controls the ability to become pregnant or give birth is an outcome of the United State's idealism of the idea of motherhood, profoundly linked to both patriotism for white America and the eventual desired establishment of a theistic society. In looking at the ways in which birth was positioned within American society, both as women and men sought to delay the conception of children, and as birth rose as a powerful affirmation of participation in American project of nationalism, it becomes clear that the pressure to conform to this role, along with each of the prior roles, places women within a landscape of removed agency, particularly within the 19th century and Evangelical contexts. While the availability and acceptance of birth control seeks to subvert the insistence on motherhood, it is often ineffective in shifting the cultural zeitgeist surrounding motherhood, as numerous other cultural and legislative tropes work to foster women towards the of bearing children as an ultimate national good, and the culmination of her lifelong performance of purity. Indeed, even the long history of the struggle over birth control possibilities points towards the conflicted relationship between the control of the female body, the cultural insistence and assumption of motherhood, and the lingering relationship between patriotism and childbirth.

## CONCLUSION

*“The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer on them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural.*

*Anticipation is imperative.”*

— Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*

This work has, thus far, focused on the present moment within Evangelical culture, and the 19th century as past. However, in this final section, I hope to look, for a brief and fleeting moment, to the future: a future that does not succumb to the same emphasis on purely fertile potential of the female body as has been demonstrated in the texts. In looking towards the future, it becomes a process of imagination: can we imagine a world wherein the agency and personhood are equally inscribed on individuals, without the vestiges of a harmful purity culture conscripting men and women both into performative roles? In many ways, the processes of purity itself foreclose this as even an imaginative possibility: in order to distinguish the boundaries and borders of our own identities, one must establish that which is not a part of one's identity. However, to merely admit defeat in the face of these particular structures of purity is premature; rather, change must be established within those areas where structures of power, however that may manifest, relinquish agency from those who are disadvantaged through the processes of purity culture in its many manifestations.

One of the difficulties in addressing this topic, particularly in terms of producing desired social change, is the way in which antagonisms are structured within the subculture of Evangelicalism. Namely, to outright reject and respond to the purity culture developed within Evangelicalism is to fulfill the already-established culture of antagonistic relationship between liberal cul-

ture and the church. In pushing back against the structures of purity that formulate Evangelical culture, and consequently, portions of American life, one merely reaffirms the fallen nature of non-Evangelical culture, demonstrating further the Evangelical need for aggressive insistence on removing oneself from the culture-at-large. In this respect, other avenues for addressing these problems must be sought; it is clear that changes to a damaging insistence on purity culture will occur slowly, without losing track of the long history of the United States, wherein social movements have constantly relied on the voices of those who have been damaged and defined by the cultural insistence on normative behaviors. Indeed, through the process of addressing where these impulses towards these specific manifestations of purity arise within an historical context, it is clear to me that presenting the desire for social change within a context that does not rely on the same insistence on present and future allows for a perspective that seeks to reach beyond the “us versus them” dichotomy of modern purity culture and the so-called “culture wars.” In this way, rather than merely producing statistical or affective persuasions in hopes of challenging a deeply ingrained performance, one can begin, instead, to rely on a depth of conversation that takes the deep, if damaging, relationship between Evangelicalism and purity into consideration.

This paper serves to investigate, in broad terms, the role of purity within American society, within a context that reaches into the past for a reading of contemporary Evangelical cultural performances. This research quickly leads to a gendered understanding of the manifestations of purity, particularly as they are seen in 19th century performative examples and culture. This, however, does not relegate itself to the historical past as a unique and separate event, but rather, looks at the long-duration of American history, leading, in this instance, into the gendered roles of the contemporary Evangelical church. In looking at the gendered manifestations through the

lens of three roles the woman plays within her life— the girl, the wife and the mother— one can see the various ways in which purity structures within America function to construct the performance of womanhood throughout a lifetime.

These three roles are presented in terms of emotional structures and time. Emotion, within the 19th century, manifested itself in terms of a gendered understanding, where men exhibited emotion through passion, using the demonstration of proper emotion as a form of capital within revival culture. Women are relegated to the emotional form of sentiment, which, while sometimes presented in terms of social reform through the inclusion of non-normative bodies within the sentimental fold, still functioned to constrict women within established emotional and domestic roles. Alongside passion and sentiment in their masculine and feminine forms, temporality also serves to delineate along gendered lines. Masculine time, as demonstrated through the emphasis on threat and response, is highly focused on the future potential of the land and the female body, relegating both to a status without agency within a constructed temporal framework. Feminine time, on the other hand, according to de Beauvoir and Kristeva, and other feminist theorists, tends to develop in cycles and “monumental time,” both of which are more connected to the biological rhythms of a woman’s lived experience. However, within the patriarchal rhetorical landscape of subcultures like the Evangelical church, these biological processes, often tied to the idea of birth, are divorced from lived experience and are sanitized and surveilled through linguistic commandeering of language associated with the female body. Because of the way that time and emotion are structured within both 19th century melodrama and, more significantly, within the larger culture both in the past and the present, the collaborative insistence on idealized roles for the woman throughout her lifetime develop and thrive within American society.

However, each of the three roles investigated here, which hinge on a culturally understood definition of purity and a woman's relationship to it, are not simply and unavoidably attained throughout all strata of American society. Rather, through subversive practices that reject the idealized perception of roles, as well as the way in which society excludes particular bodies from participation within these structures of purity, examples that deviate from the normative structures allow for the idealized norm to be challenged. These challenges, though, are often rarely fully realized within society, as legislative and society control often collaborate quickly to respond and reject the challenges to the idealized norm. This is clearly seen throughout the various roles constructed for women: within girlhood, the father figure works, even, or perhaps especially, through his absence, to present an image of the girl that is focused on her future fertile potential; within marriage, the woman, when she falls outside of the normative heterosexual and heterosexual marriage perception, is quickly either dismissed or brought back into alignment; within motherhood, the desire to delay reproduction is made into a legislative issue, with laws created that restricting access to means of avoiding or delaying the role of mother. Throughout the history of the United States of America, it is clear that society functions to restrict and regulate the roles available to women, particularly within subcultures that rely on the melodramatic structures of gendered emotion and time.

Throughout this investigation, the connection between the melodramatic structures of the late 19th century and the connection they hold to the modern Evangelical church are clear. As the church seeks to maintain a heteronormative, heterogenous culture, the same structures that developed surrounding gendered performances of time and emotion are presented as viable and even normalized world views. Within far right instances of Evangelical culture, including the

cultural performances of purity balls and the subculture of the Quiverfull movement, one can see the ways in which the affirmation of melodramatic time, with its focus on feminine fertile potential and the cyclical foreclosure of women's lived experiences, as well as the lauding of masculine forms of passion as a means of cultural capital, are developed into radicalized performances of gender roles within contemporary American culture. Because of the powerful desire for theocracy within these subcultures, the "family" values of these groups are under constant political debate: the desire for political reform constantly framed in terms of an ahistorical emphasis on the present moment beset by the fear of a godless future. However, rather than succumb to an understanding of the modern political climate as arising out of a cultural amnesia, the roots of these family values must be traced back to a 19th century reading of gender as a performance, constructed and composed by men and women alike. While this lack of long-duration history is not a phenomenon unique to the United States of America, it is certainly exacerbated by the nation's history of expansion and, eventually, imperialism, where the land itself is seen, in general, in the same terms as the female body: fertile, quantifiable, and without agency.

In many ways, the stakes of this project, and indeed, its future directions, as I envision them, hinge on a reading of radicalism within the United States, particularly developing into the question of radicalization within the far right within the United States. One issue that is clearly apparent throughout the research and development of this project is the way in which these impulses towards the removal of agency from the fertile female body and the need for masculinized passion as a mode of cultural capital are not only rooted deep within the historical and cultural consciousness of the white, heteronormative United States of America, but are also a powerful driving force in the United State's political landscape: a force that is growing in size and influ-

ence. As the “culture wars” develop between the political left and right, the gap between political viewpoints continues to widen, creating radical viewpoints on both ends of the political spectrum. On the right, this political radicalism often collates around the performance of religion, as groups like the Quiverfull movement seek to militantly and strategically develop their numbers and achieve their political aims. As noted in the Chapter Three, this political investment seeks to stop at nothing less than total theocracy, wherein the will of God, interpreted as the signifiers of Evangelical culture, is instituted as legislative finality. As the political divide continues to fluctuate within the United States, the savvy cultural understanding of far right, Evangelical groups such as Quiverfull, Focus on the Family and FamilyLife, or even purity pledge adherents perpetually recreates a sense of the United States as threatened by the ideological other, with profound implications for foreign and domestic policy.

This is not ignoring the violence that this far right, radical form of Evangelical culture can enact on its own members, demonstrated through the emphasis on personal suffering as an ultimate value. Mirroring the suffering and passion of Christ’s death on the cross, adherents of Evangelical Christianity, and, more specifically, the far right radicalized versions of religious subcultures, are told that denial and suffering are inevitable, and indeed wholesome, facets of the Christian life. Often, this manifests in personal denial of oneself as a sexual being, with the institution of guilt and fear when one does not adhere to the dominant narrative of sexual possibility within the heteronormative marriage. While it is not within the scope of this project, which tends far more towards the historical roots of these impulses, the psychoanalytic aspect of purity culture within these subcultures is an area for future research, particularly within those areas of Evangelical culture that tend towards using psychological methods to ensure participation from



its members. This aspect of far right subcultures is rarely addressed in scholarship; readings of this aspect of Evangelical culture tend far more toward the anecdotal and personal narrative, without addressing the theoretical backing of subcultural insistence on adherence to the dominant paradigm through methods of guilt and shame. In looking towards the future directions of this research, the theorization of American far right, Evangelical subcultures in terms of radicalism and psychoanalysis would provide a further scholarly understanding of how these impulses towards purity are maintained and manifested in modern society, as well as addressing the potential problems for members of these subcultures.

Throughout the course of this research, it became increasingly obvious how necessary this kind of research is: research that looks critically at cultural events with an historical context, not strictly confined to the single-discipline model of research. In this regard, I hope that this work serves to demonstrate a sense of multi-disciplinary scholarship, activated by feminist scholarship that refuses purely historical or textual restrictions. In undertaking this work, it became increasingly clear that the performative works of the 19th century present a profound comment on the current zeitgeist of purity in America, and in combining these two facets of investigation, one can see more clearly the effects of historical constructions on contemporary issues. It is my hope that scholarship continues to open its doors to work that does not necessarily fit within the prescriptions of single disciplines, but rather, can see the value in conducting research that moves fluidly between history, performative analysis of contemporary cultural movements, critical theory and textual analysis.

In looking at the processes surrounding purity within the long history of the United States of America, and the implications it holds for those who fall both within and without the pre-

sumed normative structures of American citizenship, the powerful modes of performance that construct and control gender relationships become increasingly clear. As the lifetime of a woman is positioned within the context of purity culture, narratives other than that of the child, the wife and the mother become a powerful force in enacting modes of subjectivity that are no longer relegated to modes of abjection and objectification. While each of these moments in a woman's life can certainly be powerful and affective displays of feminine potential and agency, particularly when removed from cultural forms that insist on purity as a singular moral mandate, the relegation of women into only these positions within her lifetime forecloses vast opportunities for subjectivity. In imagining a world that does not succumb to the perpetual historical formulation of purity as a primary social and patriotic good, the possibilities for women to step outside of the predetermined, transitional roles of child, wife, and mother must be both permissible and extolled. Likewise, as Evangelical culture and the Christian right continue to develop narratives of both women and men within the confines of sexual, racial and nationalistic purity, one must not ignore the historical contextualization that permits and produces these impulses; from the late 19th century's melodramatic performances of passion and sentiment into the Evangelical church's establishment of predetermined gender roles, the revelation of the long duration of history within the United States can demonstrate temporal and emotional forms that move outside of the dominant narratives, creating the possibility for a dominant culture that does not stand purely on the performance of predetermined gender roles as an ultimate social and moral good.

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