

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: ORGANIZING WHITE FEMININITY
THROUGH AMATEUR THEATRE:
PAGEANTS, RESIDENTIAL
GARDENS, DEPARTMENT STORES,
AND THE DRAMA LEAGUE OF
AMERICA, 1912–1946

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Dance, and Performance Studies

The turn of the twentieth century in the United States witnessed social events that disrupted and transformed existing racial categories. Increased immigration from Europe and the Great Migration of African Americans realigned the boundaries of whiteness. Other scholars have studied how certain social structures played a role in the racial formation of whiteness, but the selection of their archives privileged the actions of men. How did Anglo American women in the United States contribute to the racial formation of whiteness in the early twentieth century? How did women use spaces gendered as feminine to construct social and the cultural definitions of whiteness? In this dissertation, I argue that amateur theatre was a primary site where women performed and shaped whiteness. At the time, amateur theatre was emerging as a ubiquitous institution in American social life. It was an immediately gendered

space connected to the social reform spearheaded by women. At the same time, the United States experienced the rise of mass production and consumption. Material objects and things filled homes in a new way. Building on literature that has explored the role material culture played in the racial formation of whiteness, I argue that amateur theatre provided a gendered space for women to gather and organize racialized objects. Assembling and performing with the racialized objects that existed in their everyday lives brought order and definition to whiteness. Through amateur theatre, women staged racialized utopias that were ostensibly hopeful. I interrogate how gender played a role in shaping such “white hope” by analyzing how amateur theatre operated in relation to other femininely-gendered spaces, including para-educational groups for children, gardens, and department stores. For case studies, I have focused on the efforts of local chapters of the Drama League of America. The Drama League was a federation of clubs spread throughout the United States that emerged from the women’s club movement. Originally dedicated to reforming professional theatre, the organization eventually played a larger role in supporting amateur performance and the Little Theatre Movement. I analyze the histories of the chapters located in Washington, D.C., Pasadena, California, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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DRAMA LEAGUE OF AMERICA, 1912–1946

by

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Dedication

For my husband, Dr. Samuel Cortez Granados, who listened to me work through my ideas, asked important questions, reminded me to stop thinking and start writing, and always wanted to talk about whiteness even if I was not the one prompting the conversation.

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This project could not have been completed without the assistance of my advisor, Dr. Esther Kim Lee. The comments and edits that she provided in the various drafts I sent her way were always insightful and exactly what I needed to push forward my writing and argument. She shepherded this dissertation from its initial proposal and always provided advice and counsel that refined the scope of my endeavors. I am in debt to her guidance and willingness to provide a perspective on the project and my own professional development. And I have no way to thank her for the countless hours she spent advising me on grant applications, writing letters of recommendation for me, or facilitating networking opportunities. Dr. Esther Kim Lee is a gifted scholar and excellent writer, but above all she is a dedicated mentor.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Performing White Femininity in Amateur Theatre

Following the 2016 election of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, many US Americans flooded their social media platforms with pictures of safety pins, either artistic renderings of the object or photographs of the item attached to their clothing. Individuals used the pins to communicate allegiance and solidarity with members of minority communities who were marginalized by Trump's campaign rhetoric and threatened emotionally or physically after the election. Using a safety pin as a sartorial and political accessory was by no means innovative: for one, the item was a noted staple of the British punk movement. And reportedly, the post-election trend in the US took its cue from British protestors of Brexit, the referendum that called for the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union. After the referendum passed, the nation experienced an estimated 57 percent increase in xenophobic and racist incidents.¹ The safety pin emerged as a symbol to communicate solidarity, support, and a willingness to stand up for the socially vulnerable. Proponents of the practice appreciated the simplicity of the gesture and cited the ubiquity of the item as a significant feature: everyone has safety pins in their homes. It was an easy item to repurpose. As reports of similar threatening or violent incidents started to get reported within the first days of Trump's election, many

¹ Valeriya Safronova, "Safety Pins Show Support for the Vulnerable," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/14/fashion/safety-pin-ally-activism.html?_r=0, accessed November 28, 2016; Harriet Sherwood, Vikram Dodd, Nadia Khomami, and Steven Morris, "Cameron Condemns Xenophobic and Racist Abuse after Brexit Vote," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/27/sadiq-khan-muslim-council-britain-warning-of-post-brexit-racism>, accessed November 28, 2016.

people in the United States—or at least those who identified as white and liberal and who wanted to perform their identity as an ally—adopted the practice.

As a white, gay, cisgender male scholar studying theatre and working in academia, my social media platforms were filled with images of safety pins *and* (almost immediately) critiques of the practice. I saw pictures of entire families wearing the pins and memes advocating the practice. However, because I grew up as a Mormon—an American religious community that throughout the twentieth century predominantly aligned itself with neoconservative politics and neoliberal economic policies—my social media feeds also occasionally featured less receptive reactions. One person I knew from my proselytizing mission wrote, “Anyone else find it kinda [*sic*] funny that safety pins were used to hold diapers on babies and now they are used to help people that are emotionally babies realize they are in a safe place?”² And, as is the way of things, a friend of his responded with a meme that read, “See that over there son? That was once America. But now it’s just a bunch of sissies afraid to hurt each other’s feelings.” For these white men, the simple safety pin in this quotidian performance was divorced from the implications of racially or ethnically charged violence that initially sparked the trend.³ Instead, its presence amplified a perceived emasculation of US American culture. For them, the object and the ideology it signifies is gendered. Moreover, its gendering connotes a sense of national loss.

² Jacob Haws, Facebook post, November 14, 2016, 6:05 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/jacob.a.haws/posts/10157704056570075?pnref=story>, accessed November 15, 2016. Due to Facebook privacy settings this post might not be accessible, so I will include a screenshot of the post and the meme in an appendix for citation. See Appendix A.

³ By using the term “quotidian performance,” I am drawing on the work of Joshua Chambers-Letson, who uses the term to differentiate between a performance committed in the course of everyday life (like giving testimony in a court room or putting on a safety pin) and an aesthetic performance which is a staged or theatrical (re)presentation. See Joshua Chambers-Letson, *A Race So Different: Performance and Law in Asian America* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 6.

But in my feed, criticism was not limited to neo-conservative or alt-right circles. I received links to think pieces about how safety pins were empty gestures of “slacktivism.” Such articles argued that wearing the safety pin amounted to a shallow performance designed to assuage white guilt more than dismantle institutional structures supporting white supremacy and privilege. Progressive writers and activists like Christopher Keelty drew a distinction between efficacious political action and frivolous “ally theater.”⁴ In an editorial, he characterized the use of the safety pin to be “embarrassing,” self-congratulatory, or, in other words, silly, because it was primarily a performance of privilege rather than a revolutionary or reformist political act. As an academic disposed towards progressive politics, I am inclined to agree with Keelty’s critique in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of the performance to enact change that actively dismantles institutions and ideologies of white supremacy or white nationalism.

But Keelty’s particular sense of outrage and frustration shares an odd similarity with that of the other white men quoted above. The aforementioned men see the safety pin as a sign of cultural infantilization and national emasculation, while Keelty sees it as a frivolous and a politically amateurish act. Ultimately, Keelty’s critique *also* rests on a gendered logic in the US that dismisses certain performances, actions, and spaces as frivolous or amateurish, particularly when they are associated with women. His deployment of such terms, as well as those of the other men, is not

⁴ Christopher Keelty, “Dear White People, Your Safety Pins are Embarrassing,” *The Huffington Post*, November 12, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/dear-white-people-your-safety-pins-are-embarrassing_us_58278b9de4b02b1f5257a36a, Accessed November 28, 2016.

coincidental: a woman named Allison is credited with popularizing the practice in England via Twitter and many of the Americans who followed suit were also women.

The role of women and gender in shaping whiteness has taken on more meaning since the 2016 presidential campaign and election. Much has been said about how the emergence of Donald Trump's rhetoric depended on the blatant use of and appeal to an aggrieved white identity politics. For example, scholars like Carol Anderson have argued that Trump's election, evidenced by both his campaigning rhetoric *and* the Republican Party's various strategies to disenfranchise racial minorities since President Obama's election in 2008, reflect one more historical iteration of what she calls "white rage."⁵ Most of the analysis in various media and press outlets privileged an image of the typical Trump supporter that was someone who was white and male.⁶ The surprising fact that emerged after the election, however, was not the role that white men played in Trump's success, but rather the significant support he received from white women. According to exit polling data, a reported 53 percent of women in United States who voted and who identify as white voted for Trump.⁷ The results revealed that many of the conversations about whiteness, white supremacy, and white nationalism in the preceding year had

⁵ I spend more time unpacking Anderson's work later in the chapter, but she argues that each political or social advancement by African Americans has been met with an attempt by white Americans to dismantle that advancement. See Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2016).

⁶ Again, the men on Facebook referenced above and their anxiety regarding the loss of national masculinity comes to mind.

⁷ Clare Foran, "Women Aren't Responsible for Hillary Clinton's Defeat," *The Atlantic*, November 13, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/hillary-clinton-white-women-vote/507422/>, accessed November 27, 2016; Lois Beckett, Rory Carroll, Carmen Fishwick, Amber Jamieson, and Sam Thielman, "The Real 'Shy Trump' Vote – How 53 % of White Women Pushed Him to Victory," *The Guardian*, November 10, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/10/white-women-donald-trump-victory>, accessed November 26, 2016.

perpetuated a blind spot that ignored women. Sadly, this trend is not surprising or new. Even in academic scholarship, applying intersectional methodologies to study the relationship between gender and white racial identities is underdeveloped. In part, this has been because critiques of banality have been levied against the actions of women without considering the racial projects embedded in their performatives. Even with its political shortcomings, the safety pin gesture remains a performance that addresses and navigates white racial identities. Its enactment and reception are not only seen in racialized terms but also gendered ones.

Accusations of frivolity and amateurish behavior have often been directed at women who attempted to navigate their racial and gender identities or at the very spaces in which they performed such actions. Historically, it was precisely in the sites disregarded as superficial that white women were able to carve out room in the public sphere to imagine, navigate, and comprehend the boundaries and characteristics of whiteness. Their racial identities and their efforts to understand race were inextricably bound to the gendered spaces they occupied. And in those spaces, women could take everyday items from their lives and repurpose them to materialize the racialized visions they had for their community, their nation, or the world. The use of the safety pin reflects one iteration in a long legacy of strategies white women in the United States have used to shape social and cultural understandings of white femininity.

Histories about whiteness in the United States have ignored how and where women contributed to the racial formation of white identities. While the existing scholarship is critically important, the subject material and social spaces examined to create historical narratives and assert strong, compelling arguments have tended to

favor the actions of men. How did women, particularly those who would already be identified as white, play a role in shaping whiteness? *Organizing White Femininity through Amateur Theatre* seeks to explore the dynamics of the intersection of race and gender in white femininity by looking at how women utilized material objects in gendered social spaces to contribute to the racial formation of whiteness.

In the early twentieth century, when the boundaries of whiteness were in flux, a key site where women navigated and articulated racial identities was in amateur theatre. Before women's suffrage and during the early years following the passage of the nineteenth amendment, amateur performance offered women a liminal space where they could participate in the public sphere. Women participated in all areas of activity, including acting, directing, designing, and advertising. Amateur theatre provided a means to enact or advocate for social reform through performance. At the time, women were seen as naturally predisposed to lead any number of Progressive social reform initiatives in social and family life because of their gender.⁸ Amateur theatre became a gendered space where women could present potential realities or utopias that could come about through reform.⁹ But more importantly, as Shannon Jackson has pointed out with her work on settlement houses, performance was seen as

⁸ Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁹ Here, and throughout the dissertation, I am building on Jill Dolan's work that characterizes theatre as a space and social structure in which utopian performatives are enacted. The utopia is a world set apart from the existing reality, an idealized or imagined possibility. Shannon Jackson calls performances which aimed to enact reform, "reformances." Reformances staged or organized by middle-class, white women materialized the utopic worlds they hoped their reforms would create. Later in the chapter, I outline more fully how I am building on Dolan's definition of utopia and utopian performative. See Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

the means by which such reform took place.¹⁰ Similarly, *Organizing White Femininity* examines amateur theatre not only as the physical location where women could stage utopias or naturalize their realities, but as the strategy for racial formation.

Amateur theatre required women to assemble people and props to create their performances. Jackson's work focuses on the former, indicating how "reformances" depended on women training and seeing immigrants participate in an assimilationist project. The performance ostensibly reformed society as the subjects of reform played out their parts. But in addition to the participants involved, amateur theatre allowed women to bring together material items from their lives to stage their utopic visions. The twentieth century provided a ubiquity of material objects that were racialized or which carried what Robin Bernstein calls racial scripts. While objects carried such scripts in everyday life, amateur theatre provided a space to bring various objects together and choreograph those material items in relationship to one another.¹¹

Organizing White Femininity examines whiteness as a performance in relationship to material realities. As a racial identity, whiteness is predicated on and reified through the arrangement and the control of material things. Specifically, this dissertation looks at these dynamics by detailing and analyzing the histories of local chapters of an amateur arts organization called the Drama League of America from 1912 to 1946.

¹⁰ Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

¹¹ Robin Bernstein, "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race," *Social Text* 27, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 67-94. In her article, Bernstein argues that things invite people into a dance that generates their agency and informs the formation of racialized identities, beliefs, and actions. At the risk of stretching the metaphor of the dance into a cliché, I intend to consider the dynamics of amateur theatre being a specialized space where women could choreograph the racialize objects and the scripts they elicited.

In the following chapters, I argue that amateur theatre was a gendered space that allowed women to organize racialized objects and thereby navigate, articulate, and shape the boundaries of whiteness.

A History of Whiteness, Women, and Theatre in the Early Twentieth Century

At the turn of the twentieth century, race, as an idea and classification, was disrupted and transformed. Yet, race also provided a means by which individuals, communities, and the state organized reality. Previously established racial categories in the United States were disrupted by the end of slavery and later by large movements of people, including the Great Migration of African Americans and increased immigration from Europe. The turn of the century also saw the arrival of new immigrant populations from Southern and Eastern Europe. And despite many restrictions that increased as the early twentieth century progressed, some Southern and Eastern Asian immigrants managed to move into to the United States. Furthermore, the social structures that the understandings of race were built on—things like scientific and legal classification—changed. As Mae Ngai has pointed out in her history on immigration reform, the science shifted from a sense that race stemmed from cultural characteristics inheritable through environmental exposure to a more deterministic and inalterable genetic inheritance as defined by eugenics.¹² Legislatures passed Jim Crow Laws, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. Court systems upheld legal distinctions drawn across race

¹² Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

and nation, which at the time were conflated terms. And as science and law changed, new ideas about race circulated through a system of cultural representation made possible through a rapidly growing consumer culture.

Through live performance, material culture, and media such as film and audio recordings, modern understandings of racial identities arose. Through the discourse of racial difference, new races emerged as others disappeared, but this process was not always consistent. Notably, the Mediterranean race which Italians and Greeks belonged to or the Slavic race used to identify many Jews as groups of people that were not white, no longer exist in twenty-first-century usage. As historian David Roediger explains, such populations in between racial categories in the United States eventually became “white ethnics.” Throughout the twentieth century, there was little to no agreement on how many races there were; there was little to no national agreement on what race itself was. Race was, paradoxically, both a calcifying and particularly unstable category. Yet, like class, it provided order, and those in power used that new sense of order to benefit themselves. Existing scholarship like that of Matthew Frye Jacobson and David Roediger have outlined some of the ways whiteness was forged and how it was defined.

Jacobson looks at legal frameworks as a social structure to see how it acted as both a means of inclusion and exclusion. In his book *Whiteness of a Different Color*, he examines how whiteness was formed through legislation and court cases, arguing that the legality of race impacted and defined social and cultural understandings of race. Like Roediger, the majority of Jacobson’s archive consists of the complex issues surrounding how people from Southern and Eastern Europe who were not previously

considered white—by either the state or popular belief—moved into a newly formed Caucasian identity.¹³ That said, he also does consider how other court cases played a different role in excluding Asian Americans from whiteness. Similarly, *Organizing White Femininity* reflects an effort to analyze whiteness beyond a simplistic black/white binary. As will be discussed, whiteness is not only historically situated, but also dependent on localized relationships. The presence of Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans played a role in the formation of whiteness as did the presence of white ethnics or African Americans. But like Roediger, I find Jacobson's focus on the legal court cases limiting when it comes to understanding how people engaged with racial categories in their day-to-day lives. The law and legal court cases were important, but few women drafted legislation that defined race nor did they regularly pursue legal action in court. It was not the arena where women specifically or most people generally contributed to the definition and experience of whiteness. The material consequences of race are much more immediately experienced than outlined in Jacobson's history.

In *Working toward Whiteness*, David Roediger argues that whiteness was shaped through the use of colloquial language, participation in labor unions, and the ownership of a home. Particularly, Roediger examines how Southern and Eastern European immigrants created their own whiteness or “white ethnicity” through the creation of neighborhoods and communities built on restrictive covenants.¹⁴ Roediger clearly contends that the immigrant populations he looks at never faced the exclusion

¹³ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ David Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White, The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

or violence that African American, Asian American, or Hispanic American populations endured at the turn of the twentieth century. He resists describing white ethnic groups as “not quite white,” instead suggesting they were “in between whiteness.” Roediger’s history is comprehensive, but it is with his work that I wondered most what role women played. The people who primarily belonged to labor unions or applied for housing through the New Deal were men. For Roediger, race is so much a formation of associations bound through labor unions and the deployment of restrictive covenants. The men involved worked in order to procure a private space that established their whiteness. I wondered about the inverse relationship: how did women participating in the public sphere shape whiteness? Where and how did women enter and change the public sphere?

As I argue in the following chapters, amateur theatre was a ubiquitous and primary site where white women participated in the public sphere. The turn of the twentieth century not only saw the destabilization of social structures connected to race, it also saw an explosion of amateur performance activity throughout the United States. As mentioned, some cities had performances occurring in settlement houses. Municipal governments and historical societies also commissioned civic pageants. Communities built noncommercial or community theatres. The destabilization of racial order coincided with the advent of the Little Theatre Movement. Many little theatres and amateur arts organizations emerged between 1900 and 1930. *Organizing White Femininity* focuses on the activity of one such national group called the Drama League of America. But whether in the Drama League or any number of little theatres or arts associations, women were always heavily involved no matter what iteration of

amateur performance was at stake. And yet, as Dorothy Chansky has argued, the role and contributions of women have not always been highlighted in the histories of the Little Theatre Movement either.

Beyond scholarship on whiteness, amateur theatre has lacked significant attention in theatre studies because of its gendered relationship to professional theatre. In *Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and the American Audience*, Dorothy Chansky argues that proponents of an artistic and intellectual theatre at the turn of the twentieth century established not only ideologies of what theatre should be in American society, but also the institutional structures that would ensure that vision would perpetuate itself in subsequent generations. According to Chansky, “The American belief that theatre is spiritually and emotionally fulfilling, socially elevating, of civic importance, a site for assaying social change, and enriching a locus of cultural capital originated in the early decades of the twentieth century.”¹⁵ Furthermore, she contends that biases have often informed the historiography of the Little Theatre Movement, one being that the history is usually told as a means to a professional end. In other words, what has been written about or highlighted has been selected because of how it would connect to what would happen in the development of professional theatre. This has led to an abundance of research on the Provincetown Players, the Washington Square Players, and the Theatre Guild in New York City, because each of these theatres had crossover impact on professional, commercial theatre—particularly in the figure of Eugene O’Neill. While certainly significant for

¹⁵ Dorothy Chansky, *Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and the American Audience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 2.

every reason previous scholars have indicated, these case studies have perpetuated an American theatre trope: New York theatre history as American theatre history.

Additionally, Chansky suggests that the models of the Little Theatres in New York were not always representative of the Movement as a whole. She argues that key to the Little Theatre Movement was an emphasis on locality—a perspective often ignored in the history because local efforts did not always immediately or directly connect to the development of American professional theatre when the locality under consideration is moved outside of New York.

From this professional and commercial bias, Chansky contends that the historiography of the Little Theatre Movement has often perpetuated a gendered narrative that associates professional and commercial theatre with legitimacy and a prevailing masculine identity, while amateur and noncommercial theatre is presumed to be the purview of femininity. Chansky contends this gendered association rendered amateur and noncommercial theatre less legitimate, both at the turn of the twentieth century and since in the historiography. In *Organizing White Femininity*, I seek to address both biases by centering amateur theatre in a theatre history and specifically developing an amateur theatre history for activities that took place outside of New York City.

Amateur theatre was a gendered space where women could stage their ideas, imaginations, and politics. Throughout *Organizing White Femininity*, I study amateur theatre as it operated in relationship to other social spaces that were femininely gendered, including para-educational clubs for children, gardens, and department stores. Such spaces were not only gendered because women were closely associated

with them. Women specifically appealed to social gender norms to claim authority in and through those spaces to impact the public sphere. As Aileen Kraditor argued in her classic text *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, in the fight for suffrage, women at the turn of the century moved from appeals to justice (that women had inalienable rights to vote and participate in democracy as full citizens) to invoking an “expedient feminism.”¹⁶ Women argued they needed the right to vote so they could enact other social reforms in parts of society that women seemed predisposed to have authority over such as child rearing or maintaining moral order. The vote was a means to an end. In expedient arguments, they specifically legitimated women’s participation in the public sphere by basing their arguments in innate gender roles that predisposed women to stations of authority.

An appeal to the gender norms of femininity is necessary to understanding what types of white racial identities women articulated and staged. Moreover, an appeal to a natural order legitimized through conventional gender normativity had the effect of naturalizing the whiteness they constructed. But perhaps most significantly, the gendering of spaces like amateur theatre, para-educational activities, gardens, and department stores contributed to their marginalization in the history of the social processes that shaped whiteness, an error that must be corrected when considering the relationship between women, whiteness, and the intersection of race and gender. As of yet, the histories of whiteness in the early twentieth century have been inadvertently intersectional: presenting and exploring white identities created by men.

¹⁶ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

What has been ignored in the operation of whiteness by not considering the role women have played? If appealing to an expedient feminism played such a significant role in determining how women participated in the public sphere, how did the gender roles they invoked impact the whiteness they staged?

On Whiteness: Things, Rage, and Hope

In addition to conducting archival research, *Organizing White Femininity through Amateur Theatre* depends upon and contributes to scholarship in critical race studies on whiteness. Primarily, its main intervention rests in its effort to focus on gender and apply performance studies to examine the relationship between material culture and amateur theatre. It is worth noting the ways in which whiteness as a racial identity is formed in ways that are similar to but also distinct from other forms of racial formation. White racial identities, like other racial identities, are socially accepted constructs or abstractions that have physical and material consequences. In their landmark work *Racial Formation in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant define race as “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.”¹⁷ Racial categories and identities rest on a foundation of social structures and cultural representations. Theatrical representations of race would constitute cultural representations, whereas a system like gender would be a social structure that could shape race.

¹⁷ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 55.

Through their work, Omi and Winant look at how race operates as a dynamic concept because elements of the foundations can change. Race, therefore, is itself a complex system where ideas, perceptions, and relations can be reinforced or reorganized. They contend that either bulwarking or disrupting existing concepts about race occurs through racial projects which they define as “historically situated efforts and actions in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized” in a way that contributes to a process of creating, transforming, inhabiting, or destroying categories of race.¹⁸ Ultimately they suggest that such racial projects do not merely organize how others see race in their society, but also how individuals and groups view the formation of their own racial subjectivity. Whiteness is shaped by these historically situated projects. An amateur performance that creates a cultural representation of race would be a type of racial project.

Unlike other racial identities, whiteness has been shaped by a racial privilege that has led to a different process of racial formation. Whiteness has primarily been defined by its capacity to enjoy access to material resources and the power to control those resources.¹⁹ For example, according to Nell Irvin Painter, whiteness in the United States has been inextricably linked to the right to vote.²⁰ Whiteness has not been so much a matter of skin color or embodied phenotypes as it has been about an ability to participate and exercise will in the public sphere. She argues that white

¹⁸ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 55.

¹⁹ In *Acting Jewish*, Henry Bial details one exception that is worth noting. He argues that Jewish Americans had a particularly interesting relationship to the cultural representation side of racial formation because unlike most ethnic minorities, Jewish Americans owned and participated in the mediums of representation like film, theatre, and music performance. In this way, Jewish Americans had a unique relationship as a minority community in the United States. See Henry Bial, *Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 6-7.

²⁰ Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010).

supremacy might have been legitimized or policed by scientific rhetoric stemming from biology or anthropology, but race and the privileges of whiteness were primarily lived experiences based in social interactions, particularly those connected to participating in political action. Likewise, Faedra Chatard Carpenter has defined whiteness as “a fluctuating abstraction that fosters ideologies with both discursive and material consequences.”²¹ Whiteness operates as a social force that creates material consequences, but the material consequences can also impact the abstraction of whiteness. In other words, material objects can themselves be racialized, but those same materials can be utilized in an effort to effect a racial project that either reifies or rearranges existing racial categories.

Existing literature on whiteness at the turn of the twentieth century has examined the racialization of material things and how those objects advanced white supremacist ideologies. Two such examples are the work of Grace Elizabeth Hale and Robin Bernstein. In *Making Whiteness*, Grace Elizabeth Hale considers whiteness to be the product of a culture of segregation. She argues that after the Civil War, the American South produced a Lost Cause history that idealized life on the plantation forever lost to modernity, populating the history with a nostalgic cast of characters like Mamie and cultural mores that it then exported to other parts of the country. Hale argues that while the South set up laws of segregation, the rest of the nation that did not have legal segregation, through the consumption of material goods and the formation of spaces like national parks, developed a culture of segregation they had

²¹ Faedra Chatard Carpenter, *Coloring Whiteness: Acts of Critique in Black Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 9.

purchased from the South.²² The prevailing material culture that was available for purchase, consumption, use, and decoration reflected racist cultural representations of black bodies. Access to that exploitation of black bodies through mass produced goods became a characteristic of whiteness. The objects themselves reflected and advanced racial categories and social structures of power.

Robin Bernstein's work suggests that racialized objects not only reify existing racial categories in society, but also play a role in the formation of an individual's racial identity. In *Racial Innocence*, Bernstein argues that material culture can be separated into objects and things. A thing requires to be dealt with on its terms: a thing, she argues, "forces a person into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing."²³ Things are material items that elicit people to interact with them in a set of scripted ways. Things themselves do not have agency, but their capacity to hail people contributes to the generation of agency that individuals possess. Bernstein characterizes the interaction as a dance between people and things. Like Hale, Bernstein examines how material things at the turn of the twentieth century were themselves racialized. Interacting with playing cards based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or playing with a Raggedy Ann doll versus a white porcelain doll shaped the way people understood racial categories. Moreover, Bernstein argues that the racialization of objects impacted how individuals understood their own racial identity. Specifically, she contends that whiteness came to be associated with innocence as well as an anxiety about the potential loss of that innocence, while blackness could not have

²² Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

²³ Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 72.

access to the concept of innocence or the social strategies that were created to protect it.

Organizing White Femininity seeks to take Bernstein's metaphor of the dance and expand on it, considering how amateur theatre provided a space and a means for women to choreograph the dance of racialization through a strategic coordination of things. As Andrew Sofer's *The Stage Life of Props* indicates, while theatre is a site that creates cultural representations, it remains a social enterprise that ultimately depends upon the arrangement and interplay of objects and things on stage. Whether you are dealing with a handkerchief in *Othello* or a gun in *Fefu and Her Friends*, theatre has a long relationship and history with objects and things.²⁴ Any well-made play that turns on a discovery revealed through a letter—even Nora's fretful interplay with Krogstad's note in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*—knows well the dance between a character and a thing. However, the specificity of the material culture available at the turn of the twentieth century is significant. This period was marked by rapid advancements in mass production and mass consumption. Simply put, people had the capacity to have more things in their lives. While such items could be arranged and placed in relation to one another at home in the private sphere, organizing such items in amateur theatre allowed women to display their choreographies of materials in the public sphere. Because the prevailing genre in amateur theatre in the early twentieth century was Realism, amassing the material objects and things authenticated the worlds they were creating and presenting. Amateur theatre facilitated efforts to

²⁴ Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2003).

contest, explore, and perform whiteness through the collection and organization of material things.

Because amateur theatre of the early twentieth century was so bound to women's efforts at social reform, staging such racialized choreographies constituted what Jill Dolan has referred to as a utopian performative. According to Dolan, theatre functions as a social institution in part because it allows people to imagine and stage ideal worlds that do not exist in society at the moment of performance.²⁵ But like J.L. Austin's notion of a performative speech act, the utopia is created as it is performed. Theatre is a particularly effective space for utopia performatives for at least two reasons. First, because there is an audience present: the audience becomes the community in the utopia presented on stage. And second, because by gathering bodies and things to stage the utopia, theatre materially manifests the imagined, ideal world. At a moment of social disruption and reconfiguration, amateur theatre provided a space and a means for women to arrange the existing elements and racialized objects of their world to produce cultural representations that constructed new realities and new definitions for racial identities.

The idea of the utopia performative is particularly helpful given the tone and perspective of the performances that the female reformers staged. At least in the activities and efforts of the women in the Drama League of America, their visions of whiteness and the relationship between racial identity and nationalism were downright hopeful. Whether they were performing large pageants depicting groups of

²⁵ Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

people from around the world, garden plays that presented an Orientalized vision of East Asia, or an amateur play competition featuring European folk theatre, the women of different chapters of the Drama League wrestled with the realities and tensions of cultural and racial difference. But their estimation of the convergence of multiple cultures, nations, and races was hopeful. An element of the utopia performative is that amateur theatre could also be a means of humanistic empathy and cultural exchange. At the same time that there was a culture of segregation, there was an impulse to navigate or understand differences. They believed in the capacity for and virtue in cultural competency across racial divides.

The sense of hopefulness pervasive throughout the performances and utopias staged by the women of the Drama League so starkly contrasts the social process Carol Anderson has presented in her recent history of “white rage.” Anderson argues that every significant social and cultural advancement made by African Americans in US history has preceded a “deliberate and cleverly crafted opposition” by White Americans to minimize, curtail, or delegitimize those accomplishments.²⁶ She looks to the dismantlement of Reconstruction and erection of Jim Crow statutes that followed the end of slavery and creation of citizenship for African Americans. She points to the ghettoization of government programs like public housing, education, and welfare that followed civil rights victories that let African American finally have access to such resources. The election of Trump is itself a perfect crystallization of a white rage response to the election of the first African American president. Trump’s rhetoric repeatedly ghettoized African Americans, Muslims, and Latinx people in

²⁶ Carol Anderson, *White Rage*, 2.

order to connect with and legitimate the anxieties many White US Americans felt regarding their own financial or physical safety.²⁷ His campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again,” evoked a sense of loss while gesturing towards a nostalgic past of national prominence and order—a past where such order and prosperity existed because of racial privilege and inequality. The white identity politics that have been raised in the early twenty-first century are typified by a sense of outrage, anger, and anxiety regarding the future. It is ostensibly a polar opposite to the ideology that guided the women creating amateur theatre one hundred years previously, an ideology that might be characterized as “white hope.”

Far from suggesting an alternative reading of whiteness in the United States to that offered by Anderson, I am suggesting that the sensibility of “white hope” is fundamentally and historically linked to “white rage.” President Theodore Roosevelt decried his fear over the prospect that white people in the United States were committing “race suicide” by not having enough children in comparison to Catholic, Eastern European immigrants. At the same time, Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin prepared a gleeful pageant in Washington, D.C. that included the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Hawai’i in its representation of America, celebrating what such new colonies added to the future of the nation. Often, the perspective of white hope stemmed from the prevailing belief in the process of assimilation, an ideology with power dynamics that reflected and contributed to systemic white supremacy. And the vision and power of white hope galvanized an organization of material resources and

²⁷ I am using Latinx as a gender-neutral term to refer to men, women, and gender queer individuals from a variety of racial and linguistic backgrounds who might otherwise identify as Latino or Latina American.

privileges for certain groups of people and not others. White rage is only possible after social forces change or challenge the reality constructed by white hope. Understanding whiteness requires recognizing seemingly opposite reactions as related impulses.

Whiteness has often been characterized by its obfuscation and contradictory characteristics. For example, one of the challenges of whiteness is its paradoxical omnipresence and invisibility. Whiteness is visible and incites terror while being invisible and unstated.²⁸ Richard Dyer contends that whiteness asserts itself as the most typical or representative of all races, while at other moments positions itself as distinct from and superior to all other races. According to Dyer, whiteness can often function as a paradoxical racial category. It functions on the deployment of paradox but is also a construction of it. This is why a moment that saw Theodore Roosevelt railing against “race suicide” also witnessed the high visibility of whiteness and a great expansion of who fit into that racial category.

Discussions and understandings of race shifted along lines of science, nationality, consumer culture, and legal segregation or exception. Movements like eugenics and increasing concerns about modern hygiene replaced former convictions about the melting pot’s ability to assimilate foreign bodies. These forces called into question the presence of the bodies of Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe who were not quite white or “between whiteness.” However, it was also a time by which these same

²⁸ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1997). See also Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, Eric Klinenberg, and Matt Wray, “Introduction: What is Whiteness?” in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 10-13.

forces fixed a modern whiteness into its privileged position in terms of all these variant discourses connected to race—including law, science, national identity, and consumer culture. Anderson has pointed to how rage, anger, and anxiety have played an important role in the deployment of white racial identity politics. But it is also significant to consider how the aspirational and hopeful utopias that the women in the Drama League (and other institutions staging amateur performances) constructed and performed a vision of whiteness that justified the discriminatory distribution of resources under the logic of white supremacy.

While arguing that amateur theatre, as a gendered site, contributed to the expression and articulation of white hope, I recognize the potential and pitfalls that such an argument might itself be read as instituting a gendered binary. In other words, white rage could become attributed to men whereas white hope is connected to women. Such a reading would be reductive and faulty. My attempt is to expand upon Anderson's paradigm by considering the power dynamics set up in that hope. The sense of loss and rage is not possible without the hope and supremacy posited by the cultural representation and rhetoric that white femininity presented. And, as will be explored in the next chapter, hope like many other social and civic virtues were gendered or personified as women at the turn of the twentieth century. The expedient feminism claimed to rationalize women's participation in the public sphere because their gender influenced the articulation of whiteness that women staged. This is not because women are predisposed to hope, but rather an indication that the type of femininity to which women had access informed the shape of whiteness they could

stage. But that dynamic and intersection of white femininity is not visible unless the actions and contributions of women are analyzed.

In addition to indicating my attempts to avoid uncritically engaging with the gendered component of white hope, it is also worth noting I am aware of the complexity and difficulty that accompanies addressing whiteness. Whiteness studies itself has been critiqued. Some have argued that whiteness studies exists as a means for white scholars to justify re-centering or focusing solely on the actions of white subjects in historical narratives. Furthermore, the paradigm of whiteness could very easily become a lens which leads scholars studying whiteness to ignore the contributions or experiences of those not defined within whiteness. Paradoxically, such experiences are paramount to understanding how whiteness operates. An attempt to study whiteness could effectively erase those most impacted by its immediate consequences. This has sometimes been manifested within academic writing by white scholars failing to engage with a long line of scholarship on whiteness that has been produced by scholars of color. Throughout *Organizing White Femininity*, I have taken efforts to be aware of these criticisms and avoid the quagmires they identify.

Additionally, I have been continually concerned about whether my framing questions were sometimes lapsing into a dangerous tautology that assumed any action taken by white women was itself contributing to a racial project that made white women white. There is validity in the critiques of whiteness studies because whiteness is elusive and paradoxical. Attempts to pin it down for study and dissection can reify its power and position of privilege. But given how white identity politics have been used in the

early twenty-first century, it is important to attempt to generate a vocabulary for whiteness as a social phenomenon.

In 2016, putting on the safety pin ostensibly provided a demarcation between white racial identities: those that supported Trump versus those that did not. It wanted to distinguish between those that felt white rage and those that expressed white hope. Wearing the pin expressed hope that a community of solidarity and protection would be established. The performance imagined a better world founded on a safe community, and the very act of its performance effectively created that community as it imagined it. The simple act was a utopian performative and depended on repurposing and racializing an object generally found in everyday life. But as Christopher Keelty pointed out in his critique, people who voted for Trump who wanted to express solidarity and hope could easily wear the pin and do so without a sense of hypocrisy. They voted for Trump for reasons outside his racialized rhetoric but still wanted to make sure threatened communities knew they were allies. The strategies of white rage and white hope can coexist today. *Organizing White Femininity* seeks to analyze how amateur theatre, particularly the performances and activities produced by chapters of the Drama League, provided a space for women to establish the definition, logic, and characteristics of whiteness. They had hopeful visions and racialized utopias that contributed to the white identity politics that has presented itself as rage in the twenty-first century when those utopias have been threatened by changing demographics and the politics of multiculturalism.

A Federation of Clubs: The Drama League as a National Movement with Local Histories

Organizing White Femininity through Amateur Theatre focuses its analysis of amateur theatre on the work created by three local chapters of an organization called the Drama League. The Drama League of America was a national organization dedicated to the recognition and support of intellectual and artistic theatre throughout the United States. Operating between 1910 and 1931, the Drama League responded to a variety of movements and trends significant to a history of theatre and performance at the turn of the twentieth century, including the emergence of civic theatre, pageants, settlement house performances, children's and recreational theatre, university theatre, folk theatre, and (perhaps the most associated with the organization) the Little Theatre Movement. The Drama League grew out of the national women's club movement. And it was primarily composed of Anglo Americans.

Of the various women's reading clubs scattered throughout the country at the turn of the century, one club known as the Riley Circle—in Evanston, Illinois and under the direction of Alice Cushing Donaldson Riley—focused its efforts and interests on dramatic literature. But at the time, there was a scarcity of available texts; dramatic scripts were not an item publishing companies regularly featured. As a result, the Riley Circle invited scholars to present lectures on drama and theatre at club meetings. The Riley Circle had been meeting since 1901; however, in 1910, it set its sights on more national endeavors by founding the Drama League of America. The organization dedicated itself to the support of quality professional theatre and

advocated for the publication of scripts. Through its twenty-year history, the national Drama League published its own bulletins, journal, and magazines as well as organized a number of committees and initiatives to address a variety of issues in professional and noncommercial theatre. The twenty-year history of the national League left an impressive legacy and impact on the state of theatre in the United States. Previous scholars have attributed the rise of dramatic literature as a publication genre to the League. And historians have reflected on the politics, ideologies, and aesthetics the League disseminated through the pageants, plays, and educational programs it produced or managed.

The focus of the Drama League also shifted over time from an effort to reform the professional stage to a concerted interest in celebrating and supporting noncommercial, nonprofessional, or amateur theatre throughout the United States. This particularly became the case with the “death of the road” (i.e., the end of national touring productions) and the rise of the Little Theatre Movement. As is little surprise, the impact of the stock market crash in 1929 and the Great Depression contributed to the Drama League of America’s end in 1931; however, the final years before the crash indicated organizational struggle before economic trials ensued. Membership had been waning for years and the few dues that were collected could not cover the organization’s administrative or publishing costs. And an attempt to commission a national campaign advertising the League resulted in the greatest economic blunder of the organization. Recognizing similar missions and interests with an organization dedicated to the promotion of church theatre, the Drama League later attempted to form the Church and Drama League; however, this caused

prominent local chapters to leave the national organization out of protest. Internal strife, particularly over the religious/secular identity and goals of the organization, caused much more difficulties for the Drama League than subsequent national economic problems. And yet despite its ultimate collapse, a number of the League's producing centers continued operating after 1931.

As an outgrowth of the women's club movement, the Drama League was comprised of a federation of local chapters or clubs. Chapters that were located in cities with significant professional theatre scenes were referred to as "producing centers." The centers in Chicago and New York were very influential in the activity and history of the national organization, but the Drama League consisted of satellite centers scattered throughout various American cities and towns. These centers operated autonomously from the national organization and developed their own agendas, interests, and activities. The sense of autonomy was so great that the New York center resigned from and returned to the national organization twice before the national organization collapsed. Like the New York center, many other centers (including those in Pasadena, Pittsburgh, and Boston) continued operating after 1931 as well. Most centers also tended to reflect the origins of the group from the women's club movement more than the national organization itself. While the Drama League of America always had a desire to fill its leadership with men in an effort to bring greater prestige and legitimacy to the national organization and move it beyond its association with women's clubs, the local centers remained predominately run by educated, upper-middle-class Anglo American women. By focusing on local producing centers outside of Chicago and New York, I can re-center and emphasize

the contributions of individual women to the history of the Drama League as well as to historical narratives regarding the formation of whiteness.

A history of the Drama League of America has been the focus of a handful of dissertations, theses, and monograph chapters. Dorothy Chansky's aforementioned book is one example. Perhaps the two most significant dissertations have been Morris Ray Bogard's "The Drama League of America: A History and Critical Analysis of Its Activities and Achievements" and Terry A. Brino-Dean's "Aesthetic Re/visioning in the Efforts of the Drama League of America." Bogard's 1962 dissertation is an exhaustive catalog of the national body's emergence, organizational structure, initiatives, publications, conventions, and changes in leadership. Bogard's history moved the discussion of the League by going beyond the impression formed by a perusal of the League's publications. His work is based on detailed examinations of archival materials housed in New York, Chicago, and Evanston. He also had the advantage of getting in contact with Sue Ann Wilson, the executive secretary for the national organization in its last five years, before she died. Bogard's history examines the collapse of the organization, positing that financial mismanagement (particularly in regards to one disastrous foray into advertising) as well as an unsuccessful attempt to merge with a religiously affiliated society to form the Church and Drama League of America did more to undermine the life of the League than the economic realities of the Great Depression.

Brino-Dean's 2002 dissertation contends that despite the Anglophile and Euro-centric predilections of the Drama League's tastes, the activities and aesthetics of the League should not be read as "conservative" like some scholars have done in

the past. Instead, because of their Progressive attempts at social engagement and reform, Brino-Dean argues that the Drama League members were forbearers of socially relevant theatre in America. He acknowledges the race and class demographics of the Drama League's membership as homogenous, but focuses on their political and aesthetic interests. Though certainly more nuanced than Bogard's systematic chronicle of the Drama League, Brino-Dean also narrowly focuses on the history of the national organization as the entire history of the Drama League. But this has ramifications for issues of gender in the history of the league; namely, it generates a skewed perception of the labor and efforts of League members—one that favors men and ignores women. Brino-Dean fully acknowledges these issues and circumstances, endeavoring to highlight the work of women in the League throughout his dissertation. However, his dissertation does not ultimately emphasize the ramifications of gender on the political and aesthetic ideologies of the members of the Drama League he analyzes. Quite simply, that is not his project. As a result, he rarely engages with any individual histories of local centers outside of the founding club in Evanston. His history repeats a trend to focus on Chicago and New York because the national headquarters were in those cities and because of those cities' connections to professional, commercial theatre. Because whiteness is so contingent on locality, how might a concentration on other cities not only impact a history of the Drama League, but also the relationship of racial identities to the amateur theatre it supported?

The first significant published history of the Drama League was in historian Karen Blair's book *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890–1930*. Blair explored the rise of women's arts clubs at the turn of

the twentieth century and how they facilitated a shift not only in how women related to literary, visual, and performing arts, but also what role society thought the arts played in the public sphere.²⁹ In the nineteenth century, white women from more affluent classes had a distanced relationship from the arts. Blair indicates that women's societies on arts that formed often emphasized the refinement that came through familiarity with theoretical principles or historical information regarding art. Practice of any art was initially eschewed. However, clubs eventually became a space of training and performance. Personal refinement would come not only through theoretical learning but also through participatory practice. With the emergence of Progressive politics, an ideology of refinement through participation shifted from a personal endeavor to a public, social affair. According to Blair, amateur arts associations began organizing themselves and events as a means of reform.

Blair examines music societies, visual arts clubs, and eventually the creation of physical clubhouses; however, she spends two chapters discussing the role of theatrical performance, particularly in terms of pageantry and the Little Theatre Movement. Though she specifically discusses the Drama League of America in the latter chapter, the national organization and its centers were interested in both mediums. She places the League in her narrative in the way that she does in part to introduce the successful relationship between the Drama League center in Pasadena and the city's little theatre, the Pasadena Community Playhouse, as a case study. Blair's consideration and focus on Pasadena supports her claims regarding the

²⁹ Karen J. Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890–1930* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

gendered operations of the organization as a whole. Namely, that while the Drama League of America began as an outgrowth of the women's club movement, those origins always seemingly foreshadowed and influenced the leadership of organization. Almost as soon as the Drama League was formed, the national organization became fixated on having men serve in leadership positions in order to legitimize the endeavors of the society and its publications. Not only did the national leadership consist mostly of men, but annual conventions also predominately featured male speakers and the publications of male authors.

However, Blair argues that when it came to the leadership of local centers and the artistic work of the organization, women played a much greater role. Blair connects the history of the Pasadena Drama League to the Pasadena Community Playhouse Association, indicating that previous histories of Pasadena's little theatre had focused predominately on its founder and director Gilmor Brown, eliding an acknowledgement of the work of the volunteer associations that made the success of the theatre possible—volunteer associations that were predominately run by women.³⁰ Ultimately, Blair argues that a number of the successes of the women's arts associations within the little theatres led to the demise of their own influence. Particularly when it came to establishing schools or training centers built into the business model of operating theatres, the women inadvertently set up systems of revenue that would make their labor and impact obsolete. One of my own case studies builds on Blair's work. Chapter Three examines the history of the Pasadena Center and I returned to many of the archives and materials Blair used to compose her

³⁰ Blair, *The Torchbearers*, 167.

argument. But Blair's project focused on recognizing how women contributed to the success of artistic endeavors like little theatres through associations. I focus on how participating in such associations facilitated women's capacity to engage in racial formation.

There were many little theatres and amateur theatre organizations littered throughout the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. One could easily consider the American Pageant Association, Shakespeare Clubs, or drama auxiliaries of the YMCA. But the Drama League was a robust organization with which many little theatres and other arts associations affiliated. Educators in high schools, colleges, and universities as well theatre artists attended the annual conferences the Drama League hosted. The Drama League also inspired similar organizations to be set up outside of the United States. There were Drama League chapters in England, Canada, Ireland, and Australia. The Drama League of America was not the only amateur arts association, but it played a prominent role in the landscape. Furthermore, because of their emphasis on publications, activities in different local chapters were publicized throughout the national body. One of the most difficult challenges of creating a theatre history of amateur performance is the lack of existing archives. The Drama League's bulletins and magazines preserved an account of their various activities. Furthermore, the Drama League's individual chapters explored a wide array of possible amateur performances. The producing center in Washington, D.C. alone produced parades, pageants, and benefit performances while also hosting teas with professional theatre artists, holding play readings at the public library, and managing a children's theatre. And, as stated, the organization came out of the

women's club movement. It attempted to move away from that identification, but the primary participants in the organization mainly remained middle-class women. Most significantly, the Drama League of America's membership was predominantly Anglo American. Amateur theatre was by no means the sole purview of White America. For example, there was a long and rich tradition of amateur performance within African American communities at the turn of the twentieth century.³¹ The Drama League of America, often by its own design, represents what could be called white amateur theatre in the US, both because it was made by those who were already considered white and because they played a role in determining who did and did not benefit from the expansion of whiteness as a racial identity.

Chapter Breakdown: Whiteness in Drama League Producing Centers

In the chapters that follow, I detail the history of three distinct and significant producing centers of the Drama League and how their respective performances depended on the organization of racialized material objects. Because previous works focused on the national organization, they highlighted the activities of the Drama League's chapters in Chicago and New York. My case studies are located in Washington, D.C., Pasadena, California, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In addition to being cities with rich professional theatre histories, at some time each location was recognized as a significant chapter within the national organization. Each received

³¹ In addition to the incredible work by W.E.B. DuBois, Ida Wells, Zora Neale Hurston, Georgia Douglas Johnson, I highly recommend the fascinating artists Craig Prentiss discusses in his book on African American amateur theatre and religious identity. See Craig Prentiss, *Staging Faith: Religion and African American Theater from the Harlem Renaissance to World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

praise or attention for different reasons. Washington, D.C. served as the national headquarters for a brief time following World War I. It was the only time the national headquarters were located outside Chicago or New York. Pasadena, California had one of the most active little theatres in the country and received international recognition for its work. Pittsburgh produced a biweekly bulletin that had subscribers far outside the city. Throughout its existence, the Pittsburgh Center also hosted an amateur play competition, cultural exhibits, and an educational institute. Each of their activities drew visitors and participants from other states. The cities represented in my case studies reflect the wide breadth of activities individual chapters of the Drama League could work on. And while their timelines generally overlap, what I focus on for each chapter also follows a basic chronological order.

Perhaps, the most significant quality for each case study was how whiteness operated and was performed so differently in each location. Each city reveals different facets about how women could use material objects to create racialized utopias within gendered spaces. But the locality and dynamics of social structures and existing cultural representations highly impacted how certain material objects were used and how whiteness took shape in the utopias the various women in the Drama League staged.

The first chapter details the history of the Drama League in Washington, D.C. in the context of the racial and gender politics of Woodrow Wilson's presidential administration. Wilson's ambivalence towards suffrage and his administration's swift segregation of the federal government informed the various amateur performances women in the District of Columbia staged. The Washington Center of the Drama

League operated between 1912 and 1921, shortly before Wilson's election, during his presidency, and a few years after he left office. Many of the women who joined the Drama League in Washington were suffragettes, belonged to the Republican Party, and voted for either Theodore Roosevelt or William Howard Taft in 1912. Though Wilson would later endorse the nineteenth amendment, initially his victory indicated a defeat for the cause. It took constant advocacy by women throughout the country to convince the nation of the justice and equality that extending suffrage would bring. In the meantime, demonstrations and political spectacles—particularly in the nation's seat of government—allowed women to present the world that they could create *if* given the right to vote.³² Women like Hazel MacKaye, Glenna Smith Tinnin, and Ethel M. Smith created pageants, parades, and children's theatre to advocate for women's suffrage. Between 1913 and 1915, in a successive series of performances, they presented women as the embodiment of universal virtues generally considered necessary for the operation and success of a democracy and the republic.

Personifications of allegories were presented as women *and* as the means to connect to both the triumph of the past and the potential of the future. Spectacles depend upon a sedimentary process where repeated images and figures slowly layer upon one another to gradually reify or shift a society's understanding of what the spectacle represents. The repetition of those images depended on the women creating and reusing racialized material objects like costumes that brought the personified allegories to life. In Chapter Two, I trace the genealogy of these allegorical

³² Again, here I am building on Kraditor's distinction between justice feminism and expedient feminism.

spectacles—their sedimentary process—to analyze the gendered and racialized dimensions of the utopias the women in the Washington Center staged as they made an argument for their rights. That genealogy depended on both the female embodiment of allegorical virtues *and* a strategic recycling of the costumes. In Chapter Two, I analyze a suffragette protest that occurred the day before Wilson’s inauguration in 1913, a Fourth of July pageant staged four months later, a children’s theatre the League opened and ran for two years, and a benefit performance in 1921 that proved to be the final event organized by the Washington Center of the Drama League

The Washington Center’s performances depended on the logic of conventional gender roles to justify women’s presence in the public sphere, but the universalizing discursive power of whiteness solidified and legitimated their claim. The allegorical spectacles presented figures of a particular white femininity. A key characteristic of whiteness is its discursive power of universality: that whiteness stands in as a representation for the totality of humanity, a visible representation of all people no matter their racial identity. If femininity allowed women to connect themselves to key virtues, whiteness elevated the status of those virtues to be representative of both men and women. Recycling the costumes from performance to performance further bolstered the sense that the virtues they embodied were timeless and universal. Racialized rhetoric and iconography was increasingly important in an era of advancing segregationist practices and cultural behavior. While the women of the Drama League performed, Wilson’s administration established segregationist

policies and reemphasized white supremacy within the structure of the federal government.

Many of Wilson's cabinet appointments favored segregation, but no one was more innovative and vocal than the postmaster general, Albert S. Burleson. While Burleson established the template for how other agencies could separate their respective work forces along racial lines and mandated that only white employees work in positions where they would interact with customers, his wife became a significant figure in Washington's elite society. Furthermore, she served as one of the final presidents of the Washington Drama League near the end of Wilson's administration. Performances she staged marked a stark contrast from the scope, purpose, and political intent of her predecessors just five years earlier. However, they all depended on the intersection of whiteness and femininity to create presentations in the public sphere of better national and global possibilities. Those utopias depended on the presence and essential femininity of women while also validating the conceits and social structures of white supremacy. By staging a succession of elaborate spectacles in which they strategically reused specific costumes to create a racialized and gendered iconography, the women of the Washington Center of the Drama asserted and materialized their vision of white hope.

The next chapter moves across the United States to a very different coast to consider how women staged their cultural authority over the boundaries of whiteness through racialized material objects arranged in private residential gardens in Southern California. Located just outside of Los Angeles, the Pasadena Drama League operated between 1916 and 1932. Pasadena became a crown jewel for the national

Drama League when the Pasadena Center assisted in building and managing the Pasadena Playhouse, a successful little theatre. However, in addition to building the Playhouse, the women of the Pasadena Drama League shaped the cultural life and geography of modern Pasadena through other activities and events. They organized play readings, lectures, and community dances. They worked to get the Public Library, Civic Auditorium, and certain parks built. In Chapter Three, I examine the Orientalist plays that they staged in one other space they cultivated: their own residential gardens. Gardens have long been analyzed for their capacity to be quintessential heterotopias: sites of imagination and power. Like amateur theatre, in the United States, there has been a long tradition of associating gardens with women and gendering gardening activities as feminine. In Southern California, residential gardens were specifically sites where women could shape the physical and cultural landscape. However, they often did so through the labor of male Japanese immigrants who were increasingly disenfranchised and legally defined out of whiteness.

In the midst of the gendered and racial dynamics at play in their residential gardens, the women of the Pasadena Drama League repeatedly staged Orientalist romantic melodramas and comedies. The discourse and representations of Orientalism in the United States was gendered, feminizing East Asian cultures. This gendering facilitated Anglo American women's capacity to claim an authority over the realm of cultural understanding, which generally occurred through the acquisition of material goods popularized as Japonism. Amateur theatre allowed women to bring those racialized cultural items together and stage the definitions and boundaries of racial identities. While the amateur productions staged by the Pasadena Center

certainly echoed popular representations of East Asian Orientalism on professional stages, the space of the Japanese-themed gardens, the collection and arrangement of racialized material objects from their homes, and the gendered cultural authority staked out by Anglo American women produced a level of authenticity denied to professional theatre. Their performances shaped the boundaries of whiteness while also naturalizing the organization of their racial categories. The authority and authenticity asserted by the women in Pasadena would not have been possible without the material objects they gathered or the material composition of the gardens where they staged the performances. In Chapter Three, I analyze three plays that the Pasadena Center staged in private gardens between 1918 and 1922. Exploring Pasadena's obsession with Japanese-themed plays not only indicates the role women played in shaping whiteness, but also challenges the tendency in scholarship to analyze whiteness in the United States solely along a black/white binary. Furthermore, it indicates how amateur theatre could occasionally have a different relationship to props than professional theatre.

The final case study turns to Pittsburgh, examining the relationship between department stores and amateur theatre. The Pittsburgh Center for the Drama League had a long working relationship with the city's largest and most influential department store, Kaufmann's Big Store. While the Pittsburgh Center existed from 1913 well into the 1980s, the period of its greatest activity occurred between 1921 and 1946: the period when it collaborated with and benefited from the patronage of the Kaufmann's department store. Unlike the other cities discussed, Pittsburgh had a vibrant and active amateur theatre and performance scene before the Drama League

organized there. The Pittsburgh Center of the Drama League occasionally staged a few performances, but that was never its principal focus. Rather than spearheading the creation of amateur theatre, the Pittsburgh Drama League primarily deployed strategies of curation it had learned from Kaufmann's Big Store to highlight, encourage, and celebrate a particular type of amateur theatre. But department stores were themselves gendered and racialized spaces and their strategies of curation specifically targeted middle-class, white women as customers. The advent of department stores throughout the United States at the turn of the twentieth century altered how people interacted with material things. Technological advancements and social forces spurred the capacity for mass production and mass consumption, but department stores played a significant role in training people to desire material goods and participate in the acquisition of things. In addition to creating lines of credit and marketing campaigns in advertising, department stores used theatrical techniques to stage what William Leach called "lands of desire," enticing customers (particularly white women) with new imagined worlds and connecting material items to those potential realities.

In Chapter Four, I examine how the Pittsburgh Center utilized similar strategies, reorganizing material goods and creating new imagined spaces. Specifically, I analyze three sites that demonstrated both the Pittsburgh Center's curatorial practices and their collaboration with Kaufmann's Big Store: their published bulletins, annual amateur play competitions, and cultural exhibits. Each effort carried within it the organization of material resources. At times those resources were provided and other times they were restricted. For example, the

Pittsburgh Drama League did not allow African American companies to participate in the amateur play competition for many years. At the same time, like most of the Little Theatre Movement, they celebrated the emergence of folk theatre that represented the traditions and stories of different European ethnic groups. The creation of the bulletins, the amateur play competitions, and cultural exhibits indicated moments when the Pittsburgh Drama League exerted curatorial strategies to produce a particular type of amateur theatre and representation of the city. At the heart of those curatorial strategies was a control over access to material objects and spaces. Analyzing their strategies reveals how the Pittsburgh Center's efforts contributed to the formation of whiteness at times through segregationist practices, but also by establishing certain European ethnic groups as part of a larger white cultural tradition. Amateur theatre became a means by which ethnic groups from Southern and Eastern Europe, who were (as David Roediger explains) previously considered "between whiteness," were unquestionably racialized as "white ethnics." Furthermore, focusing on the curatorial strategies of the Pittsburgh Center indicates how a white identity politics narrative is often embedded in histories of the Little Theatre Movement.

Amateur theatre created by the Drama League centers played a role in shifting categories of whiteness in the United States. As an institution, it was a site where Anglo American women contributed to that process. It organized amateur theatre as a gendered space where women could gather, use, and organize racialized material objects to stage their visions of assimilation and white hope. The history of these efforts has been elided because the actions occurred in places and through means that have been deemed frivolous. *Organizing White Femininity through Amateur Theatre*

seeks to center such gendered spaces to recuperate the actions women took to stage their understandings of racial identities. Restoring an acknowledgement of their efforts should shed light on the strategies used to deploy or articulate whiteness in the twenty-first century. Moreover, it will highlight the significant role gender plays in those moments.

Chapter 2: The Washington Center of the Drama League: Costuming Allegorical Spectacles of Expedient Virtues

On the evening of February 22, 1913, the Washington Center of the Drama League hosted a lecture at the Public Library. Their guest of honor, famed American dramatist Percy MacKaye, spoke about civic theatre in relation to the redemption of leisure. His remarks touched on ideas he explored more fully in a book he had published the previous year. That night, MacKaye declared that “the use of a nation’s leisure is a test of its civilization.”¹ Like others of the era, MacKaye saw a distinction between leisure activities that were either productive or indolent. In his eyes, the former needed as many champions as it could get. He took advantage of his venue in the nation’s capital to call for the formation of a federal public amusement commission. MacKaye hoped the commission would facilitate the creation of noncommercial performances throughout the country, radically altering the type of theatre primarily produced in the United States.

Change was in the air. Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration was a month away. After the turbulent election of 1912 which saw a contest between four strong presidential candidates, two contested party conventions, and Electoral College results that defied traditional political alignments, Wilson won and Washington, D.C. prepared for the rare return of a Democrat to the head of the executive branch. Woodrow Wilson ran as a moderate reformer who championed progressive economic

¹ “Percy MacKaye Lectures: Poet and Playwright Urges Creation of Public Amusement Commission,” *Washington Post*, February 23, 1913, 9. See also Percy MacKaye, *The Civic Theatre in Relation to the Redemption of Leisure: A Book of Suggestions* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1912).

reforms and to limit the size and scope of the federal government that had been expanded under Republicans. So MacKaye's hopes for the creation of a new federal commission were at best aspirational; however, he excited the membership of the burgeoning organization in the capital.

MacKaye's presentation was the third lecture organized by the Washington Center and it followed a year where members had met regularly in the Public Library to discuss dramatic literature. George F. Bowerman was both a librarian for the Washington Public Library and the first Vice President of the Washington Center of the Drama League. When the League first organized on November 11, 1912 under the direction of Mrs. A. Starr Best from the national offices, there were over 100 people present. Eleven individuals organized as an executive committee to form the group's constitution. Bowerman was among those eleven founding members, as were Glenna Smith Tinnin and Ethel M. Smith. Initially, some members formed a Playgoing Committee that would see professional theatre in the area and publish bulletins highlighting works they found praiseworthy and felt others in the League should support. And yet, the eight year history of the Washington Center was better typified by the work women did in order to realize the reformist vision of noncommercial performance that MacKaye championed in his lecture. From November 1912 to January 1921, women like Glenna Smith Tinnin, Ethel M. Smith, Hazel MacKaye, and Adele Steiner Burleson focused their energies on generating civic performances.

In a series of performances, they particularly focused on presenting white women as the embodiment of ostensibly universal virtues considered key to the success of having a healthy democracy and governing the republic. The women of the

Drama League literally draped themselves and other women in the gender norms ascribed to femininity at the turn of the twentieth century in order to assert the necessity of including women in the public sphere and in extending suffrage to them. Historian Aileen Kraditor referred to this strategy of claiming authority through normative gender roles as an expedient feminism, contrasting it against a justice-based argument for suffrage that argued that men and women should be treated equally in society.² Suffragettes were aware of both frames and in the long fight for suffrage they gradually shifted from the latter to the former. Women claimed that because they were naturally inclined to rearing children or managing households, the impact of their authority on municipal issues affecting those spheres should be felt in the voting booth. Amateur theatre allowed women to pronounce this ideology in the public sphere. But just as importantly, it allowed them to wear the very idea on their bodies, as they took on the robes of figures like Columbia and virtues like Liberty, Hope, and Memory.

In this chapter, I explore the intersection between the performances of expedient feminism and the creation of a new white identity politics that emerged in Washington, D.C. during the presidential administration of Woodrow Wilson. Women—even those on opposite ends of the political spectrum like Glenna Smith Tinnin and Adele Steiner Burleson—performed white femininity, articulating it as a means and a source for white hope. Under white hope, presumed racial tensions, in both domestic and international spheres, could find solution through the progressive

² Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

reforms initiated and guided by the gendered virtues that white women embodied. White hope's connection to a rhetoric and politics of reform took shape under Woodrow Wilson's administration.

The Wilson administration offered many progressive reforms that affected the lives of Americans and its international neighbors. However, one promised reform they enacted—the systemic segregation of employment in agencies of the federal government—impacted the socioeconomic conditions of citizens in Washington, D.C. directly. It also had far-reaching consequences within the government and society for many years. At the time, segregation was not the stated reform that Wilson proclaimed. Instead, the Democratic Party ran on a platform that promised to reform government corruption. They particularly wanted to correct the crimes of patronage ostensibly perpetrated by the Republican Party because it basically had remained in control of the operations of the federal government since the Civil War. In some instances, such reform under Democrats came in the form of the Seventeenth Amendment that moved the selection of U.S. Senators from elections in state legislatures to general, state-wide elections. But promises to “clean up Washington” and to remove the vestiges of cronyism in the federal government specifically targeted the African Americans who had made advances and received appointments under the Republican Party.³ The federal government was by no means an idyllic realm of racial equality before the Wilson administration. However, the Southern

³ For an incredible history that explores how African Americans established middle-class lifestyles through government employment, how the Democratic Party not only dismantled systems of patronage but also African Americans' economic advancements, and how material wealth and privileges were redistributed to white Americans throughout the Wilson administration, see Eric Yellen, *Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

Democrats that Wilson appointed to various agencies, particularly in the Post Office and the Department of the Treasury, sought to instill Jim Crow era practices into the executive branch.

In some instances, the segregation policies were a matter of workforce arrangement and aesthetics. Employees of different races were no longer allowed to work in the same environments. But particularly in positions like the Post Office, African Americans were no longer allowed to serve in positions where they would interact with the public.⁴ Their presence and their labor became invisible. Through the segregation of federal employment, whiteness became associated with visible labor. The administration justified the policy on the grounds that segregation would reduce racial tension and strife. However, segregation and efforts to “reform corruption” also came with a limitation to career advancements once opened to African Americans. African Americans had spent a generation establishing middle-class lives in Washington, D.C. due to government employment. Many heavily favored the Republican Party of Lincoln and were rewarded for their support with jobs. During and after the Wilson administration, they were no longer able to maintain that socioeconomic status. Whiteness was not naturally associated with material privilege; it took a concerted effort. The racial formation of white racial identities at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States was forged through systemic redistributions of wealth and opportunities. Key to that process was the racialized rhetoric of reform,

⁴ Albert Sidney Burleson, a Congressman from Texas and Wilson’s Postmaster General, was particularly dedicated to the cause. Most of his efforts to segregate workforces or remove African Americans from service in the Post Office were replicated in other agencies during and after the Wilson administration. See Adrian Anderson. “President Wilson’s Politician: Albert Sidney Burleson of Texas,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (January 1974): 339-374.

promises to clean up Washington, and efforts to remove corruption (i.e., black bodies) from government. Whiteness was associated with a process of purification or cleansing. Because the social reform advocated for under the logic of expedient feminism echoed similar sentiments of the need for purification, suffragette performances (particularly in Washington, D.C.) also reflected white supremacist ideologies.

At the same time Wilson's administration implemented racist racial projects, he also faced scrutiny from suffragettes disappointed in his election and his party's stance on women's rights. Many suffragettes supported Teddy Roosevelt and his Progressive Party's platform. When he ran as an independent candidate, it split the Republican vote with the incumbent, William Howard Taft, effectively giving Wilson the election.⁵ Though he supported many progressive ideas, Wilson showed little interest in women's suffrage during his 1912 campaign. His political victory represented a setback for their efforts. Over the course of Wilson's administration, suffragettes would stage multiple performances and demonstrations to call for their right to vote and to bring Wilson's attention to their cause. The histories of such performances and Wilson's segregationist policies are connected. Wilson's impact on whiteness informed the performances and demonstrations organized by women in the Washington Drama League. And because the women appealed to existing gender norms about women's innate access to certain virtues, that influenced the whiteness that they could articulate. While certainly not every suffragette performance

⁵ Wilson even received less of the popular vote than William Jennings Bryan, the popular Democratic politician who famously lost three presidential elections.

happened in Washington, D.C., some significant ones did. In this chapter, I analyze the genealogy of performances women in the Drama League helped to organize in the context of Wilson's presence and his policies.

A month after MacKaye's lecture, many women in the League helped Alice Paul and the National American Women Suffrage Association to organize a massive procession and pageant the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. Women showed up from all over the country to advocate for their rights, staging spectacles at the Treasury Building and along Pennsylvania Avenue to raise national awareness of the cause. While other scholars have documented and analyzed this march, they have primarily done so as a means to discuss the history of Alice Paul's efforts to use spectacle or the legacy of political demonstrations in Washington, D.C. I focus on the efforts of the women who worked on the suffrage pageant that continued to live in the capital after the inauguration. For years, they repeatedly restaged spectacles of white women that were presented in the initial suffrage pageant. In this chapter, I begin by providing a greater analysis of the pageant-processional Alice Paul hired Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin to write and direct. Then I look at an Independence Day pageant MacKaye and Smith Tinnin worked on four months after the Inauguration. After the success of the festivities, the Drama League opened a children's theatre called the House of Play which Glenna Smith Tinnin ran. They provided a number of performances that included processions that echoed the sentiments and iconography of the earlier performances. I close the chapter with a look at a final benefit performance arranged by one of the most prominent women in Washington during and after the Wilson administration: Adele Steiner Burleson, the

wife of Postmaster General Albert Sidney Burleson. She served as one of the final presidents of the Washington Center and helped organize the final performance and event hosted by the Washington Drama League.

These spectacles presented white women as the embodied personifications of “universal” virtues, asserting that their gender gave them access to characteristics that would serve the public good. But the identities that they continually presented were racialized as well as gendered. The material object of the costume they wore to present the embodied virtue was the thing that returned in each performance, reciting the racial politics of the spectacles from the past. Tracing the material costume across the performances reveals how the women of the Washington Center of the Drama League articulated white femininity as a source for hope in troubled times.

On Allegory: Spectacles in the Pageant and Procession for Suffrage in 1913

On March 3, 1913, approximately five thousand women participated in the suffrage pageant-procession in Washington, D.C. The event occurred on the day before the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson and the organizers hoped to capitalize on the fact that many more people would be in the city and would see their demonstration. Most of the women in the march started at the Peace Monument near the Capitol Building and walked down Pennsylvania Avenue towards the Treasury Building. While they marched, another group of women performed in an elaborate pageant on the steps of the Treasury Building. *Allegory*, written by famed pageant director Hazel MacKaye, depicted Columbia responding to the historic gathering of women. Hearing the approaching procession, Columbia calls forth the great ideals of

human civilization to her side. Together, they would prepare for the suffragettes' arrival. One by one, Justice, Charity, Liberty, Peace, and Hope emerged and joined Columbia. An orchestra played different selections of music, young girls and women danced in tunics, and all the performers framed various tableaux over the course of their forty-five minute performance.

Alice Paul, Hazel MacKaye, Glenna Smith Tinnin, and the other women involved designed the procession to highlight a specific policy that women were fighting to achieve: suffrage. They saw the pageant as a way to illustrate the struggle that men *and* women have faced throughout time and the history of civilization to uphold more abstract, universal, and significant ideals. Gendering the depiction of those allegorical ideals, portraying them all as women, was deliberate. It visually articulated the logic and rhetoric of expedient feminism: by the nature of their gender, women had a greater access to virtues like Justice, Charity, Liberty, Hope, and Peace; therefore, they should be allowed to participate in the public sphere by shaping policy and reforms through voting. The pageant materialized the rhetoric, presented its logic and staged what could be possible in such a utopia. But the procession and the pageant presented a virtuous femininity that was racialized. The femininity it presented was white and defined by its universal application. At the same time, the performances along Pennsylvania Avenue and on the steps of the Treasury Building constructed whiteness through segregation and by conflating whiteness solely with European cultures.

Many scholars have investigated and analyzed the significance of the processional of suffragettes and the *Allegory* pageant. As Annelise Madsen indicates

in her own article on the pageant-procession, “this scholarship has grounded an understanding of the 1913 event in the contexts of the suffrage movement’s long history, the performative campaign for the vote, the history of pageantry, Hazel MacKaye’s career, and the history of protest demonstrations in the capital.”⁶ By 1913, British suffragettes had inspired Alice Paul with the spectacle-drive strategies they used to garner media attention and raise consciousness about women’s rights in the United Kingdom. In fact, by 1917 Alice Paul would return to Washington, D.C. with another group of suffragettes to burn pictures of Woodrow Wilson and copies of his speeches outside the White House in Lafayette Park. But in 1912 and 1913, Alice Paul used the resources of the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to organize the arguably less incendiary pageant-procession. One of the first women she hired to assist in the cause was Hazel MacKaye.

MacKaye had an established reputation in the world of theatre. Her father was Steele MacKaye, an American playwright, actor, and theatre manager. Her mother had published theatrical adaptations of Jane Austin’s works. Hazel and her brother Percy attended George Pierce Baker’s famous playwriting workshop, wrote scripts

⁶ Annelise K. Madsen, “Columbia and Her Foot Soldiers: Civic Art and the Demand for Change at the 1913 Suffrage Pageant-Procession,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2014), 287. More scholarship on the pageant-procession includes, but is not limited to the following: Karen J. Blair, “Pageantry for Women’s Rights: The Career of Hazel MacKaye, 1913--1923,” *Theatre Survey* 31 (May 1990), 44-74; Rebecca Coleman Hewett, “Progressive Compromises: Performing Gender, Race, and Class in Historical Pageants of 1913” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2010), 48-92; Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48-79; Ann Marie Nicolosi, “‘The Most Beautiful Suffragette’: Inez Milholland and the Political Currency of Beauty,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 6, no. 3 (July 2007), 286-309; Lucy G. Barber, *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 44-74; Sarah J. Moore, “Making a Spectacle of Suffrage: The National Woman Suffrage Pageant, 1913,” *Journal of American Culture* 20 (Spring 1997): 89-103; Leslie Goddard, “‘Something to Vote For’: Theatricalism in the U.S. Women’s Suffrage Movement” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2001), 108-70, 248-321; Martin S. Tackel, “Women and American Pageantry, 1908--1918” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1982), 199-212.

for professional productions, and acted, but they also each made names for themselves as directors of pageants. And as historian Karen Blair has noted, “MacKaye spent fifteen years [...] working for women’s groups that commissioned her to dramatize their messages.”⁷ MacKaye relocated to Washington from Massachusetts after Paul invited her to write the script for *Allegory*. While she lived in Washington, MacKaye worked with women who were associated with NAWSA and the Washington Drama League. Ethel M. Smith, for example, was a general secretary for both organizations. She helped publicize events through magazine and newsletter articles. Likewise, Glenna Smith Tinnin, who directed the pageant and the parade, was an active suffragette in Washington and eventually managed the Drama League’s theatre for children. Rather than examining the suffrage pageant in terms of the trajectory of either Paul’s or MacKaye’s careers, it is important to consider the impact their demonstration had in Washington even after both women left. The other women in the Drama League helped keep the iconography of white femininity they all performed in March 1913 in the local public consciousness after Inauguration Day.

The spectacle of both the march and the pageant were both quite impressive. Some of it was planned, but other elements were not. The parade was divided into a series of sections. Some women carried banners representing foreign countries or individual states that had already enfranchised women. Floats and carriages were constructed to illustrate the various occupations that women held in the workforce.

⁷ Karen J. Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 136.

Inez Milholland, dressed in white robes and representing a Joan of Arc figure, led the procession on horseback. Pennsylvania Avenue was closed off for the march and thousands gathered to watch the event.

Meanwhile, the audience at the Treasury Building enjoyed a variety of images and dances. Hedwig Reicher, a German American actress, appeared as Columbia, an Athena-like figure that was both serene and militaristic. She stood helmeted and girded with a metal breastplate while draped in a classical Greek tunic decorated with red, white, and blue stripes. Each of the other women representing the five allegorical virtues appeared in a different colored tunic. They were accompanied by young girls who served as attendants. In her dissertation “‘Something to Vote For’: Theatricalism in the U.S. Women’s Suffrage Movement,” Leslie Goddard contends that the pageant reminded spectators that women embodied significant civic virtues: “If women already exemplified the ideals of justice, hope, and liberty—and they did, according to years of American civic celebrations and patriotic rituals—then they qualified for literal consideration as citizens on precisely those same grounds.”⁸ The wide range of ages in the performers present extended that logic to women, regardless of age. Individualized selections of orchestral music played as the different virtues arrived and danced. Over the course of the forty-five minutes, the women danced and formed about seven different tableaux meant to communicate a history of women contributing to the struggle for democracy and the role the allegorical virtues played in that struggle.

⁸ Leslie Goddard, “‘Something to Vote For’: Theatricalism in the U.S. Women’s Suffrage Movement” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2001), 132.

The final tableau was supposed to end with Columbia and the other virtues introducing the arrival of the procession. Around 3:45 PM, Reicher held up her arm and gestured towards Pennsylvania Avenue as though to say, “Behold! The Future!” The tableau had the other women also freeze in poses that pointed the audience’s attention towards the direction of the scheduled entrance. However, the procession failed to appear because it ran into a little trouble along the way. Anti-suffrage protesters passed by the Washington police that were on duty and started to attack the women in the procession. About one hundred women were sent to the hospital and eventually public hearings led to the firing of the superintendent of the District’s police. Reicher was supposed to lead the other women in *Allegory* to join Milholland at the front of the procession. They were then going to march down to E Street and pass between the White House and the Ellipse as they made their way to Continental Hall. Once they arrived they would resume the final tableau again. Instead, Reicher and the women remained in the tableau for a while before finally taking bows in front of the Treasury Building. For Paul’s intent, the plan could not have gone better. Newspapers praised MacKaye’s pageant *and* had a lot to report on because of the violent altercations.

Spectacle obviously played a significant role as a political strategy in the pre-Inauguration Day events. In general, many first-wave feminists embraced spectacle as a means to challenge socially-accepted norms regarding gender. Susan Glenn argues in her book *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* that while second-wave feminists deployed a deep-seated suspicion of spectacle and the way it framed the female body for male viewership, first-wave feminists responded

differently. At the turn of the twentieth century, they leaned into spectacle as a way for women to stage notions of transgressive behavior and individuality.⁹ Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin deliberately invited famous actresses from New York, like Reicher and Milholland, to participate in the day's events. Inez Milholland was particularly known for her physical beauty. Some scholars like Rebecca Hewett and Ann Marie Nicolosi have argued that by casting Milholland, MacKaye and Smith Tinnin purposefully staged the conventional beauty of a white female body as a means to assert that suffrage was a non-threatening means for women to engage in the public sphere.¹⁰ Just as the logic of expedient feminism utilized an embrace of existing norms surrounding gender to create a means for women to participate in the public sphere, the political spectacles that first-wave feminists staged often called on established gender norms to justify an alteration to those norms.¹¹ As Amy Hughes has argued, a spectacle is "a unique system of communication [...] that rehearses and sustains conceptions of race, gender, and class [...] and which is instrumental] in the public and private spheres because of its potential to destabilize, complicate, or sustain sedimented ideological beliefs."¹² This chapter analyzes that sedimentary process as it unfolded in Washington, D.C. through a series of subsequent spectacular performances. But first, it is worth considering how the spectacles of the Inauguration

⁹ Susan Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 216-19.

¹⁰ Rebecca Coleman Hewett, "Progressive Compromises," 48-92; Ann Marie Nicolosi, "The Most Beautiful Suffragette," 286-309. Hewett particularly argues that the aesthetic ideas of female beauty used relied on and reiterated notions white female beauty.

¹¹ José Muñoz's work on disidentification would seem to apply here. See José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

¹² Amy Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 4.

Day procession and the *Allegory* pageant rehearsed and sustained ideological concepts of whiteness as well as femininity.

From the outset of planning the event, the leadership of NAWSA and the organizers of the parade and pageant made decisions that determined that the femininity presented would be foregrounded as white. The National American Woman's Suffrage Association specifically attempted to prevent women from African American suffrage societies from fully participating in the day's events. Ida B. Wells requested a place in the procession for herself and other African American women from Chicago's Alpha Suffrage Club. Furthermore, twenty-two African American women from Howard University—who had recently established the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in January 1913—expressed interest in participating in the march.¹³ Southern white women's groups proclaimed that they would not participate in the event at all if African American women were allowed to march with them. The issue divided the leadership of NAWSA, reflecting the very racialized and gendered politics wrapped up in the election of Woodrow Wilson that prompted the demonstration in the first place.

¹³ The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was the first incorporated sorority composed by African American female undergraduates recognized by a university. The 1913 March on Washington was not only the first public event in which the Deltas participated, but they were also the largest body of African American women present in procession. In 2013, there was a Suffrage Centennial March held in Washington to commemorate the historic role the 1913 march held in the fight for suffrage. That year, chapters of Delta Sigma Theta were invited to lead the procession. See Michelle Bernard, "Despite the Tremendous Risk, African American Women Marched for Suffrage, Too," *Washington Post*, March 3, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2013/03/03/despite-the-tremendous-risk-african-american-women-marched-for-suffrage-too/?utm_term=.03600f271103, accessed April 12, 2017; Mary Walton, "The Day the Deltas Marched into History," *Washington Post*, March 1, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-day-the-deltas-marched-into-history/2013/03/01/eabbf130-811d-11e2-b99e-6baf4ebe42df_story.html?utm_term=.adb02bc3968e, accessed April 12, 2017.

Many of the leaders of NAWSA belonged to the Republican Party. The election of Woodrow Wilson signaled not only a threat to the advancement of women's rights, but also a promise to bring the influence of Southern Democrats into the executive branch of the federal government. Paul's hopes were to use the pageant-processional to bring the nation's attention to the cause of suffrage, but neither she nor the leadership of NAWSA were ignorant of the new alignment of political power to which they were performing. The threat from Southern white women's groups to abstain from participating in an integrated march mirrored the sentiments of the political actors that Wilson would appoint throughout his administration. Ultimately, the leadership of NAWSA chose to appease the Southern white women by segregating the parade, informing Wells, the Deltas, and other African American suffragettes that they could march at the back of the procession or not participate at all. While Wells consented only to defy the restriction by moving into her state's delegation when the parade began, the efforts of Paul and the other organizers indicated a concerted effort to define the racialized boundaries of the feminine citizenship for which they were arguing. The literal march towards greater access for women to participate in the public sphere did not need to preclude a reification that full citizenship was primarily associated with whiteness.

Assuaging segregationist sentiments in the parade reflected an awareness of the new political climate suffragettes would be working within and constituted an example of what Carol Anderson has referred to as white rage. Institutionalized segregation certainly emerged from an effort to retain a racialized status quo that had been disrupted by the end of slavery. But Anderson points out, that it was particularly

African Americans' ability to gain access to political participation and material prosperity that ignited concerted efforts from Anglo Americans to curtail those advancements. Segregating the parade in Washington, D.C., a city that enjoyed the cultivation of a strong African American middle class, articulated a response to that advancement and staged the social order that certain white participants intended to instate. Anglo Americans did not merely reify existing white supremacist paradigms: they systematically dismantled social structures that were redefining black citizenship in the United States. The segregation in the parade was in its own way a utopia performative: presenting a sentiment of how things would be if white women had access to suffrage and could curtail the influence of male black voters, simultaneously producing that reality in Washington, D.C. as it was enacted.

But the pageant-procession did not only foreground its performance of white femininity through the politics of white rage and the strategies of segregation. MacKaye and Smith Tinnin's design for the pageant and procession articulated a sense of white hope: a belief that racial and social tensions would be mollified through assimilation and a cultural unity built on abstract and ostensibly universal ideals. The emergence of white hope depended on a fairly radical conflation of whiteness with a Pan-European cultural heritage. Whiteness was not only defined against the blackness of African Americans, but in relationship to the advancements or accomplishments of various European nations or ethnic groups.

For example, while the parade included delegations from states that had already extended suffrage to women, they took a back seat to the floats that were made to represent various nations involved in the fight for suffrage. Directly behind

Inez Milholland and a large wagon with a banner calling for a constitutional amendment rode a series of floats representing the nations that had extended full suffrage to women: Norway, Finland, New Zealand, and Australia. They were followed by floats honoring Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland for providing partial suffrage. After a contextualization of suffrage in global terms, Glenna Smith Tinnin arranged for sections of floats that indicated the history of suffrage in the United States, highlighted the professions in which women were employed, and, finally, represented the nine states that had legalized suffrage.¹⁴ Smith Tinnin framed suffrage as a national issue by emphasizing its global context; however, the global community presented was exclusively white. The floats did not reflect the efforts by women of color that were active in the history of suffrage in the represented countries. Even the acknowledgement of suffrage in New Zealand and Australia, nations that belonged to the British Commonwealth, equated the advancement of suffrage with the sense of a shared Pan-European cultural heritage and white racial identity.

The *Allegory* pageant echoed the conflation of whiteness with broadly-defined European origins, particularly in the musical selections that played as the female performers danced. A band located near the steps of the Treasury Building introduced each virtue with a specific fanfare and orchestral theme. On the one hand, the pieces were patriotic and imbued the ceremony with a sacred tone; on the other hand, Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin clearly selected the music pieces to emphasize a European cultural heritage. The music came from composers who originated from a

¹⁴ The nine states represented were Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Washington, California, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon. For a fuller description of the parade, see Rebecca Coleman Hewett, "Progressive Compromises," 68-72.

variety of places across Europe. For example, the figure of Justice came out to “Pilgrim’s Chorus” from Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*, Charity to an arrangement of “Ombra mai fu” from Handel’s *Xerxes*, and Liberty to the “Triumphal March” from Verdi’s *Aida*. Other selections from Wagner, Mendelssohn, and Dvořák were included throughout the pageant, overall representing the contributions of German, Italian, and Czech composers. The selections and their origins were not incidental.

Florence Fleming Noyes, the choreographer of the pageant’s dances, explained in the official program note that while the parade represented women’s struggle for suffrage in 1913, the pageant was meant to illuminate the timeless and universal struggle that men *and* women endure to maintain and to achieve ideals. MacKaye and Smith Tinnin selected musical pieces they felt would elevate the visual spectacle of the pageant beyond its temporal and specific locality. They selected the Treasury Building as a performance space for similar reasons, hoping the structure’s architectural echoes of Greek Antiquity would transfer a sense of timelessness and universality to the performance. The musical selections were likewise seen as timeless and universalizing, while simultaneously reflecting and evoking their Pan-European origins. Richard Dyer has pointed out that the rhetoric of universality has long been instrumental to the establishment and reproduction of power structures that have privileged whiteness. Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin emphasized that universality and staged women’s suffrage as one more cultural advancement produced by a Pan-European cultural heritage. Doing so, they not only defined American citizenship in terms whiteness, but also indicated that whiteness could potentially include many different ethnic groups from Europe.

Central to this performance of white hope was the idea that white women and white femininity were the key to producing a utopic republic. MacKaye and Smith Tinnin articulated this perspective by having white women embody the allegorical abstractions considered necessary for a functioning democracy. Often, allegory has been considered a simplistic or obvious mode of representation because the presentation of an allegory carries within itself both its meaning and its interpretation. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, many artists and social workers—particularly those interested in pageantry—wanted to revive the power of allegory present in medieval visual art, poetry, and performance practices.¹⁵ Examining Hazel MacKaye’s writings, including her unpublished memoir “Pioneering in Pageantry,” Rebecca Hewett argues that MacKaye’s devotion to pageantry as a medium rested in the fact that the community represented in the pageant was the community presenting the pageant itself. “In shaping the pageant to (literally) stage an argument for woman suffrage, the *kind* of woman for whom *Allegory* lobbied was made evident.”¹⁶ MacKaye’s sentiments were not unlike Walter Benjamin’s estimation of allegory. He argued in favor of allegory’s potential as a device because he believed, “Representation is not to be viewed for its end product but for its process.”¹⁷ Allegory’s simultaneous presentation of its meaning and its interpretation shifts the focus to the process of the representation’s creation. Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin’s representation of allegorical virtues presented women as the

¹⁵ David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1990).

¹⁶ Rebecca Coleman Hewett, “Progressive Compromises,” 67 (original emphasis).

¹⁷ Bainard Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory,” *Thinking Allegory Otherwise*, ed. Brenda Machosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 114.

embodiment of those virtues, but by casting exclusively white women in those roles, they also staged whiteness as one of the “timeless” virtues required for citizenship.

Their representation of Columbia in *Allegory* illustrates this process.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Columbia served as a feminine allegorical figure representing the lands of the nation. By the turn of the twentieth century as the frontier closed and the United States began to build its empire abroad, she had transitioned from a native figure indicative of an “Indian Princess” to an Anglo American woman clad in a militaristic breastplate and tunic from classical Greece. In visual art, Columbia was occasionally ghosted by the race that was erased from her visage. Sometimes she still appeared as a woman of color. But the casting of a German American actress emphasized the whitening of the symbolic figure.

An important strategy that also facilitated the whitening of Columbia and the other civic virtues was the racialization of their costumes. The women wore Greek tunics, styled after what they believed women wore in Ancient Greece. In fact, they particularly designed the tunics to evoke the idea of how women were presented in Greek statuary.¹⁸ Cultural representations of Antiquity in the early twentieth century played a role in nominally extending the definition of whiteness to include Greek and Italian immigrants. At the time, sociologists and anthropologists categorized Greeks and Italians as members of the Mediterranean race, a racial sub-category that fit under the larger category of Caucasian. As the Supreme Court case *United States v. Bhagat*

¹⁸ According to the official program note, the costumes were designed by Mr. John P.S. Neligh and constructed by the Neighborhood House, a settlement house in Washington, D.C. Neligh and his wife Clara D. Neligh were both active members of the Washington Drama League. Clara Neligh played a significant role in the operations of the children’s theatre discussed later in the chapter. While that theatre was operational, it collaborated with the Neighborhood House fairly frequently.

Singh Thind would later prove, however, categorical Caucasian identity did not always translate to being identified as white. And yet, unlike Thind and other Indian Americans, Greek and Italian Americans were occasionally associated with Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Because historians had a desire to trace an American cultural lineage to Antiquity, the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome came to be considered culturally white. Mary Simonson and Shannon Walsh have argued how cultural representations of Antiquity—both in terms of material items and staged performances—facilitated the association of Ancient Greece and Rome with whiteness.¹⁹ Dancers like Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis based their choreography on inspiration they received from statuary. As Walsh explains, because the ancient statues were bleached white from the passage of time, women would sometimes paint their bodies white to more closely resemble the statues they were imitating. The costume of the tunic also facilitated this racial project, associating the woman wearing it with a timeless whiteness and retroactively categorizing Ancient civilizations as white.

The tunics worn by the women in the *Allegory* pageant were part of an effort to use material cultural to extend the boundaries of whiteness. It allowed Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin to argue that the idea of women's suffrage was not absurd, but consistent with the timeless and universal founding principles of democracy. Furthermore, the tunics allowed MacKaye and Smith Tinnin to articulate that women, particularly white women, were inextricably connected to those virtues

¹⁹ Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge*, 48-58; Shannon Walsh, "Muscular Maternity: Progressive Era Physical Culture, Biopolitics, and Performance" (PhD. Diss., University of Minnesota, 2011), 166-219.

and had been throughout time and the history of civilizations. The tunics evoked a racialized logic that established a lineage of white supremacy in the history of humanity, providing a vision of a racial order that appealed to the new Democratic administration without negating the progressive inclusion of white women into the democratic process. The allegorical representations of Columbia, Justice, Charity, Liberty, Peace, and Hope brought a material reality to the belief that by nature of their gender, women were naturally connected to the principles that would make them assets in determining social and political policies. But bringing those representations to life meant draping them in costumes that were already racialized.

In the following sections, I analyze how Hazel MacKaye, Glenna Smith Tinnin, Clara D. Neligh, Adele Steiner Burleson, Elizabeth Noyes Thompson, and other women in the Washington Center of the Drama League continually restaged the allegorical representations of women they established in the pageant-procession in March 1913. In the context of a sitting administration that did not always support women's rights, MacKaye and Smith Tinnin repeatedly staged the feminized personified virtues in relation to a celebrated but passive male abstraction. Both the pageant *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* staged in July 1913 and the children's play *The Ladies of the White House* produced in January 1914 operated as spectacles that featured fairly inactive patriotic male figures surrounded by an array of dancing, vibrant female bodies. The genealogy of the spectacle depended on the women not only returning to the iconography they staged in previous performances, but literally recycling the very costumes they had used in each iteration. Tracing the material object of the costume throughout the performances of the Washington Drama League

indicates the alternating ways it came to define and represent white femininity as the Wilson administration progressed and changed the face of the city.

The Nation and Empire as White Femininity: Reviving the Allegories for Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party

Around 4:00 PM on July 4, 1913, approximately 2,500 children gathered on the National Mall. Dressed variously as Indians, cowboys, fairy tale characters, middy boys, middy girls, flower girls, baseball boys, minutemen from the Revolutionary War, and at least 25 cherubic pairs of George and Martha Washingtons, the happy throng of young children yearning to breathe free paraded from around the Capitol Building, past the Smithsonian Institute, and on down to the northern grounds of the Ellipse near the Washington Monument. They had an appointment to make: they were to be the principal guests invited to witness and celebrate Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party.²⁰ At 5:00 PM, that party, which is to say that elaborately orchestrated civic pageant, began.

Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party—both the procession of children down the Mall and the pageant near the monument—was a collaboration between the Washington Center of the Drama League and the District's Independence Day Committee. Beyond the regularly scheduled lectures, meetings, and discussions held in the Public Library, the event marked the first of many performances produced

²⁰ Descriptions based on the following: Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin, "Nation's 137th Birthday Party: The Story of the Central Feature of the Fourth of July Pageant to Be Given in Washington by the Washington Center of the Drama League of America and the Committee for Independence Day Celebration," *Washington Post*, June 08, 1913. MT3; "Quiet but Big 4th: Pageants to Take the Place of Noisy Fireworks," *Washington Post*, July 4, 1913, 2; and Ethel M. Smith, "Pageantry and the Drama League." *The Theatre Magazine* 18 (November 1913), 171-73.

specifically by the Washington Center of the Drama League. Its success among approximately 10,000 spectators would energize the League as they explored future endeavors. Both this pageant and subsequent performances showcased the interest of the women in the Washington Center to use performance to educate young audiences in the city. Their elaborate spectacles extended the work they initiated in the suffrage pageant *Allegory. Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* equated white women not only with civic virtues necessary for democracy, but also with the states of the nation and the material bounty associated with those states. Furthermore, the pageant presented a narrative that envisioned a successful integration of modern colonies established by a growing American empire into the glory of a grand, global American future.

In its moment, the spectacle helped provide entertainment for what otherwise might have been a lackluster holiday. While celebrations previous years had budgets of about \$3000, in 1913, they were only able to raise \$1500.²¹ Newspapers lamented the lack of a firework display but thanked the League and the Committee for their civic dedication. The League was not the only active committee responsible for the day's events. In addition to the committee for the pageant, six other organizations and committees facilitated the activity of the day, including the District's Chamber of Commerce, the retail merchants' association, the committee on street decoration, and the committee of historic sites. And there were many events and activities held that day: the Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, presided over the day; Senator Gallinger of New Hampshire gave a speech about the perils of providing more local,

²¹ "Quiet but Big 4th: Pageants to Take the Place of Noisy Fireworks," *Washington Post*, July 4, 1913, 2.

political autonomy to the District of Columbia; local newspapers sponsored parades where people dressed as characters from the comics.²² But nothing seemed to eclipse the lack of fireworks quite like the excitement and energy surrounding the pageant-procession organized by Glenna Smith Tinnin, Hazel MacKaye, Ethel M. Smith, and other women of the Washington Center of the Drama League.

In newspaper accounts that came in the following days, the pageant committee repeatedly received the most abounding praise for their efforts. Notably, they were also the only committee boasting any female membership. In fact, eight of its nine members were women. *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* was by far the largest and most attended event of the day. As the crown jewel in the day's patriotic proceedings, one newspaper writer indicated, "The occasion, according to the statements of many of those present, will linger long in the memory of the residents of Washington as one of the most beautiful and inspiring series of events ever witnessed here."²³ After rehearsing for two weeks in a space next to the League's temporary headquarters which were across the street from the White House and the Treasury Building, the women of the Drama League performed the majority of the labor required to organize, cast, rehearse, publicize, and ultimately perform in the pageant.²⁴ The

²² "Gallinger Tells of Future City: Fourth of July Orator Decries Attempt to Introduce Partisan Politics," *Washington Times*, July 4, 1913, 2; "Safer and Saner than ever before." *Evening Star*. July 4, 1913. 1.

²³ "Pageant Delights Immense Throng: Thousands Join 'Uncle Sam' for Celebration of His 137th Birthday," *Evening Star*, July 5, 1913, 2.

²⁴ Interesting side note, the headquarters were located on F St NW, directly across the street from the steps of the Treasury Building where *Allegory* was performed. It was also across the street from the Hotel Washington, where the final performance organized by the Drama League was held, which will be discussed later in the chapter. The Drama League did work in other parts of the city, but this area seemed to be a nexus. See "Plans for Fourth are Taking Form: More Volunteers Wanted for 'Soldiers' and 'Signers' in the Pageant," *Evening Star*, June 25, 1913, 2.

beauty and inspiration at the heart of their celebration extended the politics and life of certain allegorical spectacles of white femininity staged during the March suffrage pageant.

Less than four months after staging *Allegory*, Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin collaborated again to write, direct, and orchestrate a civic pageant foregrounding the significant presence and contribution of white women in civil society. The Independence Day pageant-procession structurally mirrored *Allegory*. It began with a procession or parade that moved through the city before ending in an established location for a more dramatically-tight presentation of characters and personified images. However, this time the pageant was meant to start when the procession arrived, rather than attempting to coordinate a simultaneous ending. When writing about the significance of the “pageant-procession” format for *Allegory*, Glenna Smith Tinnin argued that both components were necessary elements of the spectacle, contending:

We do not in any way underestimate the value of the parade. Wherever produced, it presents three strong arguments to the public—the argument of numbers, the argument of quality (for many people, viewing a parade realize for the first time that intelligent, level-headed women are suffrage advocates), and the argument of serious purpose. The pageant can do all this and more. The possibilities this form of expression offers for driving home arguments, for stirring the sentiments, for making an appeal, are limitless. A pageant can be immeasurably more convincing than the best of lectures, for it can say the same thing to the public the lecturer says, and in that “that same thing” is presented pictorially, it goes forth with power. An idea that is driven home to the mind through the eye produces a more striking and lasting impression than any that goes through the ear.²⁵

²⁵ Glenna Smith Tinnin, “Why the Pageant?” *Woman's Journal and Suffrage News* 44, no. 7 (February 15, 1913), 50.

In terms of the procession and the pageant, the visual impact was the key component. Like their earlier suffrage pageant, *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* staged women as personified allegorical figures and virtues. National embodiments like Columbia and abstract virtues such as Liberty, Peace, and Progress returned. However, the Independence Day pageant also featured hundreds of women dressed as various states of the Union and as great gifts from around the country that were framed as fundamental to the character of the nation. MacKaye and Smith Tinnin structured the events as a birthday party for the children to attend, where they could see and learn about symbols and principles in American democracy. Following their own procession across the Mall, the children became the primary audience for the spectacle that presented white women as the building blocks of national identity.

Strikingly, the violent disturbances and cases of physical injury that occurred during the March demonstrations did not deter District political leadership from trusting the development of the performance to MacKaye and Smith Tinnin. There may be any number of reasons why there were no publicized concerns: anything from ignorance that MacKaye and Smith Tinnin were in charge of *Allegory* to a greater interest in cultivating the energy Hazel's brother Percy proselytized earlier that year. The only anxieties regarding safety that were articulated concerned the temperature of the summer day and the duration of the march the children would make. Glenna Smith Tinnin surveyed the Mall and assured parents the route would remain "safe and

sane.”²⁶ The path was not too far and the temperatures at the time of day would not be extreme.

The lack of antagonism they faced in the past and, quite frankly the lack of attention to this performance in theatre history since, might rest in the content of the piece. Unlike *Allegory*, *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* ostensibly lacks clear political intent: it is not making a direct argument for women's suffrage. It was seen as innocent because it was a procession and pageant for children. And it put an iconic symbol of patriarchy in the form of Uncle Sam at its center. However, in *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*, Hazel MacKaye, Glenna Smith Tinnin, Ethel M. Smith, and other women of the Washington Drama League revived their personified allegories of civic virtues in the white female form. In this “innocent” spectacle, MacKaye and Smith Tinnin again staged and centered white women as the embodiment of the civic virtues necessary for citizenship, giving them the right to participate in the democratic system.

The premise for the pageant's proceedings was that Columbia—the iconic feminine representation of the American lands—had decided to throw a birthday party for Uncle Sam. By attending the proceedings, the throngs of citizens, including the parading children, had accepted her invitation. As the sun began to set, it illuminated the actions of between 150 and 200 adults who volunteered to perform in the natural amphitheater at the Washington Monument. There was a very simple set: a white dais with two chairs and a staircase leading up to a pedestal. A herald emerged

²⁶ “Pageantry and Music Replace Noise and Red on Fourth: Thousands of Children to Partake in Safe and Sane Celebration Under the Auspices of the Drama League of the District,” *Washington Herald*, June 15, 1913, 3.

first, playing the refrain for Yankee Doodle on his trumpet, which summoned two Revolutionary Minutemen with fife and drum. They ushered in Uncle Sam who greeted the children to his birthday party before stepping onto the dais. The herald and minutemen then played “Hail, Columbia!” at which point Colombia, herself, appeared. Helmeted and adorned in classical Greek robes colored in red, white, and blue, Columbia looked exactly as she had when Hedwig Reicher assumed the role four months earlier and presided over the proceedings in *Allegory*.

After taking a stately march to the dais to begin her duties as hostess, Columbia welcomed the party’s distinguished guests, each bearing a specific gift. First, the original thirteen colonies arrived. They brought Liberty, a woman clad in white robes who assumed her elevated position on the staircase pedestal. Next came “Dixie Girls” in bonnets and hoopskirts, bearing cotton, tobacco, and sugarcane. Florida followed, bringing an alligator and an ostrich who danced to the tune of “Turkey in the Straw.” Maine brought a lobster. Six brawny men of the Middle West brought wheat and corn. Ranch girls from the Far West galloped in with trays of fruit and baskets of flowers. Some of final guests were the adopted children of the nation: Alaska, the Philippines, “Porto Rico,” and, as one *Washington Post* writer described, “It remained for Hawaii to arouse the witnessing throng to enthusiasm. With a tray [of pineapple] above his head, R. Bassett Blackley, representing the island, executed a native dance to the strains of ‘Aloha.’”²⁷ As Uncle Sam thanked everyone for coming, who should arrive last to the party, but the white robed figure of Peace. Extending her

²⁷ “Gay, With No Noise: Capital Enjoys Big Pageants, but Never a Firecracker,” *Washington Post*. July 5, 1913, 2.

arms in benediction, she summoned her sisters, Prosperity and Progress. The states, territories, and gifts circled around them in the pageant's final tableau.

The new characters introduced in this pageant necessitated the construction of elaborate costumes that could represent alligators, giant fish, and ostriches. Some citizens around the city donated outfits or materials and Mr. W. Bowery Pain worked on the more intricate designs, particularly those that were basically large puppets. They used their rehearsal space on F Street to create some of the extra Grecian robes that they needed. However, the greatest source of costumes they had was the *Allegory* pageant itself. Many of the robes that the young women and girls danced in on the steps of the Treasury Building were recycled. While Columbia's costume was rebuilt in the same style that had been worn by Reicher, Liberty's was the exact same robe. The Grecian robes that the white women had used to embody the allegorical virtues of democracy were repurposed for other white women to take on those same roles or to represent various states of the Union. Those costumes reasserted the same racialized and gendered politics that they had been used to articulate in the *Allegory* pageant. White women and white femininity were framed as essential for the success of the nation. Unlike *Allegory*, however, subsequent performances of the Washington Drama League did not necessarily assert that the principles they embodied were representative of both women and men.

The dramaturgy for *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* acknowledges the reality of patriarchal systems and representations of power, but ultimately evokes that representation in order to decenter it. The birthday was ostensibly for Uncle Sam. He is a prominent figure throughout the piece. He is the first significant and recognizable

character to appear and spends most of his time on a central dais as the action of the pageant takes place before him. Every state that arrives comes to honor him; every gift that dances forward to delight the children has come to be given to him. Glenna Smith Tinnin's staging of the regal figures on the dais was itself paying tribute to patriarchal definitions of family structure. A few photographs indicate that in addition to the adult Uncle Sam, there was also a young boy dressed as a younger, smaller version of Uncle Sam, wearing matching striped pants. The young Uncle Sam sat at the end of the dais. Between the paternal Uncle Sam and the maternal Columbia, the child performer sat as a surrogate for the children in the audience *and* completed a nice heteronormative family picture. With Liberty on a pedestal above everyone, there was literally a pure, female angel in the home, dressed in white robes for the family stage picture and watching over all the proceedings. Initially, at face value, *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* appears far removed from the politics and conventions of *Allegory*. But ultimately, while the proceedings revolve around him, Uncle Sam is a passive persona in the piece. Columbia initiates and directs the action while feminine allegorical abstractions like Liberty and Peace hold the greatest positions of prominence, both in terms of dramatic structure and literal staging. Given suffragettes' feelings about the election of Woodrow Wilson, it was not quite like lighting a picture of his face on fire outside his house, but it was still quite the critique of Wilson's refusal to support women's suffrage. Women did not need to wait for Wilson's administration. They were already central to the success and vibrancy of the nation's principles, regions, and material wealth.

A few of the prominent roles, including Columbia, Uncle Sam, and Liberty, were played by professional actors connected to local theatres like the Poli Players, but many of the parts in the pageant were played by amateur volunteers. Some were members of the Reader's Club (an organization affiliated with the Drama League) and many were young, unmarried women.²⁸ These young women filled many of the roles, particularly by representing the individual states. In addition to the presence of personified abstractions, the decision to embody states as women is another element MacKaye and Smith Tinnin decided to repeat from their work in *Allegory*. In the suffrage parade that made its way down Pennsylvania Avenue, the states presented were those which had already enfranchised women and they were recognizable because they carried identifying banners. In *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*, the presentation of the states was fairly uniform with young women dressed in flowing white tunics that matched those worn by Liberty, Peace, Progress, and Prosperity.²⁹ Ethel M. Smith, the secretary for both the National American Women's Suffrage Association and the Washington Center of the Drama League, published an article in *The Theatre Magazine* to promote the efforts and success of the pageant. Smith argued, the pageant was "unprecedented in Washington, a city of such diverse and transient population that its name has been proverbial for its lack of civic pride." And yet, according to her, the pageant was "nothing less than a remarkable triumph" because the people "organized the most democratic and most artistic celebration of

²⁸ "Party to 'Uncle Sam': Fourth of July Pageant Will Be Cast this Week," *Washington Post*, June 09, 1913, 4.

²⁹ The only states represented by men were the mid-western states who brought corn and wheat. Both crops were represented by groups of women.

the Nation's birthday." The article's main illustration of the remarkable triumph highlighted the dancing of the young women that comprised the piece. These women were the virtues, states, and gifts the nation needed to flourish and to enjoy the most democratic celebration. Like *Allegory*, the spectacle asserted that white women had access to the virtues and identity that would justify their participation in the democratic process. Significant to the argument of that spectacle was the dimension of whiteness framed in their organized performance.

When looking at *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*, there are different routes to take to analyze the Washington Drama League's participation in early twentieth-century racial projects. For example, one could parse out the representation of the "adopted children" that Hazel MacKaye wrote and Glenna Smith Tinnin staged. Against a backdrop of mounting American Imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, what level of exotification was present in performance of the Philippines and "Porto Rico"—to say nothing of Blackley's crowd-pleasing native dance from Hawai'i? It might also be worth teasing out the lack of representation: who did not get invited to the party? The impact of whiteness by exclusion of African Americans in *Allegory* and the National American Women's Suffrage Association has already been mentioned and Rebecca Hewett's dissertation teases out the topic in greater detail.

Given the backdrop of Washington, D.C., the discriminatory processes Wilson's administration started putting in place by July 1913, and the blatant allegorical imagery of the performance's content, nationalism's relationship to racial identity is worth exploring. I raise nationalism as a way into the historical analysis of

whiteness for two main reasons. First, nationality and race were almost interchangeable as terms and as structures of social organization in early twentieth-century rhetoric. In order to be a citizen of the United States, a person had to be white. Within a decade of the Washington Center's performances, court cases like *Ozawa v. United States* and *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* would not only equate whiteness with citizenship, but also establish common sense as a means to assess when someone could be identified as white. Second, nationalism was the primary framing device of nearly every endeavor of the Washington Drama League.

The year 1913 was situated in an era where the relationship between nationality and racial categories was shifting. In the 18th and 19th century, the terms “nation” and “race” were conflated. But historian Mae Ngai has argued that in the early twentieth century, there was a significant “disaggregation” of the terms, typified by the racial classifications in the 1920 census and the legal language of the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. In terms of immigration law, 1913 was a moment caught in the transition from regulation to restriction, from belief in assimilation to conviction in deterministic heredity. As Ngai points out, there has been a long conversation about the role of eugenics on immigration law. As a result, “Placing the eugenics movement in the foreground [...] has obscured from view other racial constructions.”³⁰ And she goes on to illustrate how the calcification of “national origins” rested not on racial superiority but rather racial difference. In the theory and rhetoric of national origins, white races originated from various nation states of Europe, whereas “the ‘colored

³⁰ Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and The Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 24

racess' were imagined as having no country of origin. They lay outside the concept of nationality and therefore citizenship."³¹ By 1924, this prevailing logic precluded the possibility of assimilation. In 1913, it had not yet shifted and calcified.

The logic of *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* reflects the tension in shifting ideologies. On the one hand, it partially assumes the ability of people in the Philippines and Hawai'i to assimilate. They are seen as the adopted children of the nation that will be included in the final tableau of the country's future. MacKaye and Smith Tinnin's tableaux presumed a universal applicability of the virtues and principles at the heart of democratic governance. The dramaturgy of the pageant suggests that territories throughout the world could apply those ideas irrespective of ethnic, national, or racial origin. At the same time, the people of the territories are still framed as exotic and different within the pageant. They are referred to as potential contributors, not fully realized states. Furthermore, the paternalistic framing of children also precludes a sense that full citizenship will be extended to them. They are adopted children in part because they have not organized as a nation. Because they have not organized as a nation, their society is instead organized by race. MacKaye and Smith Tinnin present a hopeful vision of the ability of non-white people in the adopted territories to assimilate; however, their vision is also tempered. They ended up staging those in the new territories much like they staged the African American suffragettes earlier that year: segregated from the state delegations and relegated to the end of the procession. Still, the belief that non-white protectorates could assimilate—however fraught, conflicted, or tempered that belief may have been—is

³¹ Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 27.

the articulation of white hope. At a moment when Southern Democrats moved into the federal government and implemented segregation as a means to quell racial tensions, women like Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin dared to dream that whiteness and citizenship could be expansive and applicable to all. Part of the functional operation of white hope is the continual reaffirmation of white supremacist ideology.

Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party upholds the supremacy of whiteness by simultaneously celebrating and ignoring its relationship to citizenship. If we consider Richard Dyer's definition of whiteness as paradoxically present and absent, positioned as both typical of all races and yet superior to all races, nationalism framed as disaggregated from race and yet always already related to it becomes a frame by which whiteness would have been articulated in the early twentieth century.³² *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* represented a racial project that produced whiteness because it articulated a vision of U.S. nationalism as a system of non-racial nationalism. While Wilson's segregationist policies managed to make black labor invisible and equate reformed government labor with whiteness, Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin's pageant put white femininity at the center of a visible understanding of American citizenship. Paradoxically, whiteness was presented as the means for advancements in organizing as a nation rather than along racial lines.

What I find compelling about this paradox is the logic of organizational structure presumed in nationalism and lacking in areas of the world that supposedly congregated according to race. In a Progressive model of history, nationalism offered

³² Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3-4.

the developed and evolved replacement for primitive, chaotic, less organized systems like race or religion. The turn of the twentieth century in the United States was itself characterized by professionalization and bureaucratization, or what historian Robert Wiebe referred to as “the search for order.” The formation of an arts advocacy and producing group like the Drama League of America was an extension of these trends in developing organizing structures. As historian Karen Blair has argued, to be in an arts club was not solely for personal refinement or training: it was a means by which one participated in the civil society as an active citizen.³³ Working to orchestrate a pageant in and of itself was a concerted effort to participate in organized civil society, a characteristic of a “non-racial” (or rather white) nationalism.

Disgruntled with Woodrow Wilson, Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin offered two pageant processions that challenged his administration and party’s perceptions of women’s place in civil society. The next section discusses another performance where a political patriarchal figure was presented as inactive in comparison to the movement and vitality of women. However, their assertions that white women should contribute to the public sphere occasionally reified the very racist logics that were informing the segregationist policies of Wilson’s administration. Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin revived an economy of images that kept their visual and political arguments in circulation. Central to that economy of images was the fact that the women of the Drama League recycled the materials they used from performance to performance, particularly the costumes that brought life to the allegorical figures they embodied. Through future endeavors

³³ Karen J. Blair, *Torchbearers*, 1-32.

organized by the Washington Center of the Drama League, Smith Tinnin would continue facilitating their animation and efficacy by focusing on spreading the message to children.

Memory in the House of Play: An Allegorical Spectacle in a Children's Theatre

After the Fourth of July pageant received a lot of praise in the city's newspapers, the members of the Drama League were energized. The following years were filled with a number of staged amateur theatrical productions. Like other chapters of the Drama League, the Washington Center established a core team of performers and designers as an extension of their amateur performance committee. Hazel MacKaye initially served as the chair of the committee for about a year before returning north to Massachusetts. The Washington Drama League Players showcased their talents and enthusiasm in a variety of venues, including D.C.'s Neighborhood House (a settlement house) and the auditorium of the Wilson Public School. Glenna Smith Tinnin occasionally helped to facilitate the organization of a night of one acts, but most of the time Bertram Bloch—a young actor, playwright, and director—took responsibility for leading the Players.³⁴ In the meantime, Smith Tinnin and other women in the Washington Center invested their time and focus on staging similar performances with children.

³⁴ "Local News Briefs," *Washington Post*, May 11, 1916, 16. Bertram Bloch's significant professional theatrical credit was his co-authorship of the Broadway play *Dark Victory*, as well as its cinematic adaptation starring Bette Davis. After working with the D.C. Drama League and in New York, Bloch spent most of his life editing screenplays in Hollywood.

In addition to the committee that MacKaye oversaw, the Drama League organized the Junior Committee for Amateur Performance that encouraged children and adolescents to participate in amateur theatrical productions. It turns out that the Junior Committee of the Washington Center proved even more active and innovative than its senior corollary. In fact, with the leadership of Glenna Smith Tinnin and Clara D. Neligh, they managed to accomplish something the Washington Drama League Players continually planned for but were never able to achieve: the procurement of a steady theatrical space. One of the most exciting ventures the women of the Drama League pursued after the success of *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party* was the creation of a theatre for children. They christened it the House of Play.

While their programs targeted boys and girls, the leaders of the House of Play created opportunities for young girls to see themselves and other women active in the history of the nation and the work of theatre production. Furthermore, they continued to articulate to young women that by virtue of their gender and race they had access to the ideal attributes necessary for citizenry. The House of Play became the space and the project where the women of the Washington Center could continue to produce allegorical spectacles of white femininity where civic virtues were personified and seen by a new generation of young women. Participating in the House of Play promised to mature young girls and maintain their purity as the women of tomorrow. It was a space and an endeavor where they learned how to engage in democratic principles and could see representations of femininity placed in national history. Just as key allegorical ideals returned from *Allegory* and found new life in

Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party, those same racialized symbols of gendered virtues returned in the management and on the stage of the House of Play. Key to the resurrection of those images was again the recycling of the very costumes that had been used in the previous performances.

Even though Columbia and Liberty were still showing up, by its third iteration and implementation, the greatest virtue in the allegorical spectacle of white femininity became Memory. In this section, in addition to providing a history for the House of play, I will discuss a production of two short one-acts staged there on George Washington's birthday in 1914. Whereas memory informed the dramaturgy of *Allegory* and *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*, she appeared as a personified virtue in *The Ladies of the White House*. In that performance, Memory was, herself, an allegorical spectacle as well as the volitional power that animated one more procession that linked white femininity with national identity. While I focus on a reading of the personified Memory in *The Ladies of the White House*, I look at that production as indicative of the embodied memory the women of the Washington Center sought to cultivate at the House of Play. While one young woman took on the role of Memory, throughout its two year operation, the House of Play invited many children to navigate the cultural memory through embodied practices known as "rhythmic expression." The memories evoked and the techniques employed in the House of Play to convey them continued an early twentieth-century practice to train and construct whiteness in the bodies of children.

In September 1913, Glenna Smith Tinnin and Clara D. Neligh (the chair of the Junior Committee) combined forces with the Neighborhood House to convert an

abandoned church building in the southwest quadrant of the city into a children's theatre. Located at 493 M Street Southwest, the old Faith Chapel stood about a block from where the successful regional theatre Arena Stage now stands. The brick structure had once served as a branch for the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. However, by 1913, for the exception of a few activities like lectures that the Neighborhood House organized, the property had been left dormant for approximately three years.³⁵ The Drama League used the end of the summer to raise funds, rally support, and repair the structure. Since Clara Neligh also served as a secretary and social worker in the Neighborhood House for many years, that settlement house often sent the children affiliated with its services to the House of Play. But the operation and management of the theatre primarily fell under the responsibilities of the Drama League, particularly Glenna Smith Tinnin as its artistic director.

The House of Play opened by the end of September 1913 and remained operational until around March 1915. The first production on September 21 included two one act shows. One, entitled *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*, was based on a Japanese fable and featured kindergarten-aged children. *The Fisherman's Wife* followed, presented by an older set of children ranging from 10 to 12. The special guests of the theatre's opening night were President Woodrow Wilson's daughters.³⁶ One of the reasons the House of Play managed to draw concentrated crowds and participants was

³⁵ "New House of Play Will Aid Children: Workers of Neighborhood Settlement and Drama League Start It," *Evening Star*, September 12, 1913, 10; "Home of Child Actors: 'House of Play' New Enterprise of Drama League," *Washington Post*, September 14, 1913, ES10.

³⁶ Aunt Anna, "The Cousins' Club," *Washington Post*, Sept 21, 1913, MS7.

because at the time Washington schools did not permit the use of their facilities after operational hours. There were no venues supplying the type of service, entertainment, or activity the House of Play provided on weekends. As long as the schools maintained the policy, there was no competition for the children's participation.³⁷ But even within a month of the children's theatre opening, a commissioner of the District was addressing parents about re-evaluating the use of school buildings as civic centers with community activities.

The House of Play was an impressive structure and find for the Washington Center. The old church boasted 400 available seats. The space also came with a balcony. But rather than increasing the seating capacity, it served as a storage space and shop for costumes. One of the very first uses of the building was to store the numerous costumes created for the Independence Day pageant-procession. The costumes of Columbia, Liberty, and Progress (as well as various elaborate animal puppets) were available for use throughout the operation of the House of Play. Access to these costumes not only allowed the children to use the various outfits as they played, but they also allowed the women of the Drama League to resurrect the allegorical figures and images present at Uncle Sam's birthday party and the pre-Inauguration Day demonstration.

Nowhere was that more true than in the birthday celebration held at the House of Play on February 21, 1914 in honor of the memory of George Washington. The weekend festivities offered not one but two plays to reflect the spirit of the weekend:

³⁷ Elizabeth V. Brown, "The House of Play," *Atlantic Educational Journal* 14, no. 3 (March 1914), 271-72; "Schools for Citizens: Newman Would Open Buildings to Civic Gatherings," *Washington Post*, October 18, 1913, 14.

The Ladies of the White House and *A Birthday Party at Mount Vernon*.³⁸ The *Birthday Party* featured George and Martha Washington as well as a procession of various Founding Fathers and historical figures anachronistically gathered to share their well-wishes. Like the procession on the Fourth of July, the party again allowed the children to put on some eighteenth-century inspired costumes to use. They also demonstrated a minuet of mirth and constructed a play within a play. The presidential birthday boy and his guests followed the parade of historical figures and an interlude of dancing with a staged play within the play. So not unlike Smith Tinnin and MacKaye's work on *Allegory* and *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*, dramaturgically *A Birthday Party at Mount Vernon* was structured as a processional followed by a dance and a theatrical presentation. But the procession preceding the play was not limited solely to the parade in *A Birthday Party at Mount Vernon*. *The Ladies of the White House* was itself a processional spectacle.

For the show that really began the great national patriarch's party, Clara Neligh directed a large group of girls from the Neighborhood House. Under the backdrop of another celebration of a national patriarch, the women of the Drama League guided young girls in performing a pageant replete with representations of civic ideals and personas embodied in white female bodies. In *The Ladies of the White House*, the curtain rises on Columbia and Liberty sitting and conversing with the Girl of Today. In the midst of their conversation on how to help the Girl of Today mature into a woman of Tomorrow, Columbia and Liberty call on Memory to

³⁸ "Two Patriotic Plays: Peace Club and Neighborhood House Entertain Today, Washington Birthday Fete," *Washington Post*, February 21, 1914, 4; "Two Amateur Performances Given at 'House of Play,'" *Washington Herald*, February 22, 1914, 12.

emerge. They ask her to summon all of the ladies of the white house, the women who had served as First Ladies. In similar fashion to *Allegory* and *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*, Columbia exhibits commanding influence, issuing direction to her fellow allegorical personification:

Memory, Memory, awaken.
And roll back the clouds of the past:
Show us the dames from the White House,
From Martha on down to the last.³⁹

As each young girl came across the stage, she had a line to share: both for the Girl of Today and the audience of young boys and girls. After all of the girls came out on the stage, their sequence of bestowing advice was followed by a final procession accompanied by music. The point was to give the audience one more chance to “get a good look at them as they pass by.”⁴⁰ Memory had called forth the female figures to share wisdom from experience, but ultimately she called them forward to be seen. By being seen, white female figures connected to national history might be remembered by the young girls and boys in the audience. Again, the work of the women of the Washington Center focused on Smith Tinnin’s axiom regarding the power of a pageant to accomplish more and “be immeasurably more convincing than the best of lectures.”⁴¹ The allegorical spectacle called for the personification of Memory to be present while itself writing historical remembrance for its young participants and audience members.

³⁹ “A Day of Good Things,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 1915, MS7.

⁴⁰ “A Day of Good Things,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 1915, MS7.

⁴¹ Glenna Smith Tinnin, “Why the Pageant?” *Woman's Journal and Suffrage News* 44, no. 7 (February 15, 1913), 50.

The women of the Washington Center had already worked with allegorical spectacles to train young girls in the House of Play, and their repetition of certain key figures made Memory a significant virtue in their efforts. On January 3, 1914, the Wawasee Camp Fire Girls with the assistance of a director from the Washington Center put on a production of Rachel Lyman Field's play *Everygirl*.⁴² *Everygirl* was an adaptation of a popular play at the time, *Everywoman*—which was itself an adaptation of the medieval morality play, *Everyman*. In *Everygirl*, the titular archetypal girl meets Hope, who informs her that life requires girls to grow up, leave their gardens, and choose their friends wisely. The Girl considers her friends Mirth, Wealth, and Knowledge, but she finds dissatisfaction with each. Instead she finds companionship in Work, Health, and Love.⁴³ When Neligh, Smith Tinnin, or any number of groups affiliated with the House of Play worked with young women, they trafficked in allegory and instruction. It is significant to think about how the Girl of Today from *The Ladies of the White House* reflected or echoed the Girl of *Everygirl*, just as Columbia, Liberty, and Memory echoed their appearances and performances in the suffragette and patriotic pageants of the previous year. If the images and icons did not echo for the young girls, they certainly did for the women participating in the process producing the economy of images to which they exposed the young women.

These images depended on memory. Memory played a significant role in Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin's work in *Allegory*. Within that pageant,

⁴² "At the House of Play," *Washington Post*, December 28, 1913, MT7.

⁴³ Julia Murdock, "Camp Fire Girls Give Morality Play Today," *Washington Times*, January 3, 1914, 9. The performance was so popular, it was repeated the following week on January 10, see "Camp Fire Girls to Repeat 'Everygirl': Saturday Matinee at House of Play Will Have Two Parts," *Washington Times*, January 9, 1914, 9.

women from many different historical periods and civilizations were presented to make the case for women's suffrage. MacKaye and Smith Tinnin argued that by relying on memory and considering the past, advancing women's suffrage was the next logical step in preserving the universal principles great civilizations were founded upon. In *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*, MacKaye and Smith Tinnin cast children's memory towards the founding narratives of the nation. They rehearsed to children the history of the important thirteen colonies and the variety of other states throughout the Union. In *Ladies of the White House*, the personified Memory calls forth women of America's past to meet and greet not only the staged Girl of Today, but all of the girls that were in the audience who gathered to celebrate President Washington's birthday. Foregrounded before the celebration of the patriarch's birthday was a procession of American women and their history. A femininely gendered Memory facilitated that spectacle while Columbia directed it.

The Ladies of the White House was an act of feminist historiography that depended on a visual spectacle that materialized cultural memory. One newspaper described how the cast of young girls would come out dressed as figures like Martha Washington, Dolly Madison, and then "all of the other President's wives whom you have met in your histories."⁴⁴ This article was written towards children to invite them to attend the performance at the House of Play. While Martha and Dolly were certainly popular and familiar figures at the time, it stands to reason that women like Sarah Childress Polk and Julia Dent Grant were no more illuminated in primary school pedagogy in 1914 than they are now. So while the children may certainly have

⁴⁴ "A Day of Good Things," *Washington Post*, February 15, 1915, MS7.

met the Presidents in “their histories,” chances are they never met their wives. But women who were familiar with civic pageants recognized the importance of performance in historiography. In his history on civic pageants, David Glassberg argues that pageants allowed towns to acknowledge and stage aspects of their municipal history they knew never made it into history books. Pageant masters sometimes trained young participants to go into communities to interview older citizens to gather stories and events to tie into the narratives and tableaux to augment existing historiographies through the massive civic spectacle.⁴⁵ The children of the District may have met the Presidents in their history books, but they met representations of the First Ladies in the performance at the House of Play. Their introduction and familiarity with the ladies of the White House was based on a visual experience itself rooted in a visual experience. While Neligh directed the piece, she also designed the costumes. As one newspaper article described them, they were a “faithful reproduction of the portraits which hang on the White House walls.”⁴⁶ Neligh worked from memory, but she also produced a spectacle that would be recalled whenever the children at the performance would go on a visit or tour of the White House.

For the second time, the women of the Washington Center managed to celebrate a national patriarch’s birthday through an allegorical spectacle where personifications of white femininity justified women’s presence and participation in the national history and community. Columbia was again figured in a key relationship

⁴⁵ David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 62.

⁴⁶ “Children Will Observe Washington’s Birthday: Two Productions Planned for Tomorrow at the House of Play,” *Evening Star*, February 20, 1914, 22.

with Liberty. There remained a repetition of Columbia's power to reign over a procession that would lead into or constitute a part of the patriarch's party. The spectacle relied on personifying abstract ideals like Liberty and Memory, but *The Ladies of the White House* also personified the titular women in the portraits. The spectacle moved those women from the world of portraiture and into the space of allegory commanded by Columbia, Neligh, and Smith Tinnin. No matter what the historical and individual perspectives of the women presented were, their allegorical presence became supportive of the suffrage politics of its creators. The Memory that Neligh crafted followed the internal logic of Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin's pageant from the year before. Part of producing each of these spectacles was the use of a methodology of performance created by the woman who first choreographed the dances for *Allegory*. Florence Fleming Noyes' work on rhythmic expression depended on ideology of embodied memory. Rhythmic expression was a movement training theory and practice that was itself seeped in white supremacist ideologies.

By February 1914, Glenna Smith Tinnin had already started to take the House of Play in an untraditional direction for a children's theatre. When the Washington Center of the Drama League organized a benefit performance at the Belasco Theatre to raise funds to keep the theatre going after its first year, they proclaimed,

The EVOLUTION from the Children's Theatre idea to the HOUSE OF PLAY idea, was easy and natural. We had only to listen to the voices of the children and accede to their demands. It was a SPONTANEOUS OUTBURST of the

child's instinct for play, and we had only to direct it into WHOLESOME channels, and give it sympathetic supervision.⁴⁷

The original plan that the House of Play followed for its first three months was to operate like a children's theatre where the children would come in throughout the week, rehearse their respective plays, and perform them for family members and other children on Saturdays. However, Glenna Smith Tinnin explained in newspaper publications, at a presentation in Philadelphia during an annual conference of the national Drama League of America, and in reports to clubs around the city that, as much as the children enjoyed the theatrical plays, "the informal play was the thing."⁴⁸ She noticed consistently that the children coming to the House of Play showed more enthusiasm for the process of theatre making than the final Saturday performance of a theatrical production.

So in December 1913, they switched gears, spending more time letting the children play. Under the new program, rather than select a script to rehearse, Glenna Smith Tinnin or one of the other women working at the House of Play, would read a familiar fairy tale or story. After the reading, the women would guide the children, but let the children decide how they wanted to enact the story. Glenna Smith Tinnin explained that in these "story plays," children would act "without scenery or properties, but with fervor and imagination."⁴⁹ A variety of costumes were available,

⁴⁷ "About the House of Play," Theatre program for Belasco Theatre Production of *Racketty-Packetty House*, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection of Library of Congress, Theatre Playbills Collection, April 18, 1914 (original emphasis).

⁴⁸ Glenna Smith Tinnin, "Truths by Women Who Know: Children Trained in Self-Expression in House of Play," *Washington Times*, May 21, 1914, 6.

⁴⁹ "The Drama League Convention, 1914," *The Drama Magazine* 4 (1914), 503-04. At the same panel Smith Tinnin presented on, Mrs. Minnie Hert-Heniger of New York and the Children's Education Theatre suggested that working in children's theatre taught her something that nine years in the settlement house failed to impart: "to help the people create their own ideas from within, rather to impose on them my ideals from without."

but they were ancillary to the freedom of choice and movement the women of the Drama League presented as necessary for the activity. Ostensibly, the stage story or procession relied on improvisation dictated by the children. However, the technique of movement Glenna Smith Tinnin pursued in the House of Play depended on forms of cultural memory. The children's movement was itself a spectacle of memory.

Rhythmic expression was a mode of movement created by Florence Fleming Noyes, an American dancer who developed and built on instructional methods of rhythm which reinforced ideas of morality, virtue, and restraint. Like many other dancers in the early twentieth century, including Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, Noyes built a system of dance instruction based on the work of Franoise Delsarte and his American student, Steele MacKaye. As Shannon Walsh has recently argued, Delsarte's theoretical explanations for his techniques presumed universal concepts about human bodies as well as society itself. Delsarte's techniques took on a life in the United States through MacKaye and his own students. Examining the fascination of women in the early twentieth century to use the ubiquitous techniques to pose like Greek statues and apply makeup to whiten their skin so that they would more closely resemble the white ruins of Greece, Walsh asserts, that in American amateur performance, Delsarte's techniques became a means for white women to enact and perform their own white racial identities. And that whiteness became defined in part through a movement of restraint coupled with universalizing concepts.⁵⁰ Noyes's own

⁵⁰ Shannon Walsh, "Manufacturing Whiteness: Americanized Delsarte and Racial Formation" (unpublished conference presentation), Mid-America Theatre Conference (Kansas City, Missouri: Friday, March 20, 2015).

work echoes these principles; so much so that the school that she founded in Portland, Maine, continues to have classes where women don diaphanous tunics.

The key concept for her method was for dancers to explore and find embodied expressions or gestures that would correspond with a feeling or an idea. Noyes observed that many play theorists working at the turn of the century focused on the working class, arguing that play and sport need to be provided to reinvigorate overworked bodies. She argued that men and women in all classes needed to free themselves of the corsets and embodied mannerisms that had been learned but were harmful to the body. Overall, her dance philosophy and her methods for leading adults or children were not unlike the tunics: they emphasized the notion that there was a universality that could be accessed. But as Walsh has argued the universality posited was steeped in its own system of privilege that focused on manufacturing and training whiteness.

Florence Fleming Noyes had established a working relationship with Glenna Smith Tinnin. Noyes portrayed the figure of Liberty in *Allegory* and choreographed the other dances when Smith Tinnin directed. During the summer of 1914, Smith Tinnin and a few other women from the Washington Drama League traveled to New York to study with Noyes, to learn more about her rhythmic expression techniques. However, the visit was less about learning how to guide children through “rhythmic expression” and more about learning how to teach other women the technique. In November 1914, J.R. Hildebrand of the *Washington Times* indicated,

...a new feature of the House of Play lies in its newly assumed function of a training school for volunteer workers in the field. So successful was the experiment last year that other cities wished to copy the idea started here, but

found it impossible to obtain workers who could carry out the methods worked out by Mrs. Glenna Smith Tinnin and her associates.⁵¹

By the second season, the House of Play had expanded its aims as an educational theatre by opening its sights to training other women working with children. In fact, newspaper coverage of the House of Play indicated that the trip to work with Noyes during the summer solidified the rhythmic expression foundation the House of Play was built on.⁵² Works on story-plays and pageants, including spectacles like *The Ladies of the White House*, reflected the principles of rhythmic expression already embedded within their performances. The form of rhythmic expression became the means throughout the course of the House of Play's operation to stage spectacles of whiteness.

Those spectacles were specifically shaped by women and were predominantly made for young white women. The allegorical spectacle of white femininity in the pageant-procession of *The Ladies of the White House* was the most evident conjuring of a personified Memory. However, memory was a key virtue presented in nearly all of the endeavors of the House of Play as the women of the Drama League presented a series of personified virtues necessary for citizenship and embodied as women to a new generation of young girls. The white racial identity of those virtues, particularly

⁵¹ J.R. Hildebrand. "Creative Instinct Developed in Play: Drama League Will Reopen Novel Institution to Give Vent to Rhythmic Impulses of Children." *Washington Times*, November 19, 1914, 5. In its second year, the House of Play (as well as the headquarters of the Washington Drama League) moved from the M Street address in the southeast section of the city up 1121 Vermont Avenue in the northwest section of the city. The venue was refitted for performances and Smith Tinnin argued that it gave them the opportunity to be more accessible to the rest of the city and to work with children who had never seen or experienced a story play or a theatrical production.

⁵² House of Play to Open Second Season Saturday: Will Occupy Its Attractive New Home on Vermont Avenue. Mrs. Timmons' Plans." *Evening Star*. November 25, 1914. 4.

as they were conjured through Noyes' movement techniques, was key to the operation of the spectacle and vision of female citizenship.

After two years of operation, the House of Play closed. Its final recorded performance was in March 1915, under the direction of Glenna Smith Tinnin. While operational, the heart of the theatre's mission—at least according to her—was “conserving and developing the poetic, artistic, and dramatic instinct of children.” That training and engagement was celebrated as being both “wholesome” and “thoroughly democratic.”⁵³ These qualities were necessarily bound together. Citizenship depended on a capacity to engage in the democratic system of government, and that capacity itself depended on a morality consisting of virtues. For the time that it operated, the House of Play was a space where white women could instill those virtues in the next generation of children. But as in previous performances that they staged, when the women of the Washington Center represented civic virtues, they presented allegorical personifications of those virtues in racialized and gendered terms.

White Hope and White Saviors: Benefit Performances for International Relief

In January 1921, the Washington Center of the Drama League organized a theatrical benefit to raise funds for the relief of the Near East and Russian Relief effort. Throughout the previous decade, after the House of Play closed, the activity of

⁵³ Smith Tinnin, Glenna. “Truths by Women Who Know: Children Trained in Self-Expression in House of Play.” *Washington Times*. May 21, 1914, 6; “About the House of Play,” Theatre program for Belasco Theatre Production of *Racketty-Packetty House*, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection of Library of Congress, Theatre Playbills Collection, April 18, 1914.

the Washington Center slowed down. It continued to organize lectures and discussions at the public library, stage a few amateur performances, and host social teas with invited professional artists, but during World War I, the ambitious endeavors of the Washington Center disappeared. They did not even play a role in the suffrage protests organized for Woodrow Wilson's second inauguration in 1917. At the same time, after the Great War when the Washington Center became active again, its vision of the scope of its involvement in the global community grew. Citizenship, and by association whiteness, was not only defined in terms of the nation, but the world. The final performance of the Drama League again saw women staging spectacles of white femininity. But after the war, a sentiment of white hope manifested itself through the trope of the white savior.

The 1921 benefit performance marked the final event planned and executed by the Washington Center. It lacked the continuation of the specific allegorical spectacles seen previously: women no longer dressed and performed as personifications of Columbia, Liberty, or Progress. However, the organization of the benefit performance maintained the League's endeavors to protect and produce a particular white femininity for and in the young women of Washington, D.C. Both the staged one-acts *and* the orchestration of the evening as an act of international benevolence were performances contributing to an allegorical spectacle of white femininity, civically and racially responsible not only to matters within the United States but throughout the globe as well. These performances staged the virtues of generosity and independence. While these civic virtues were no longer personified by ideal female figures, they were no less embodied by the women involved in the

evening's events, both on and off stage. As in previous performances, the allegorical spectacle of feminized virtues asserted that young white women could participate in a democratic system while also training them to do so. The benefit, with its international perspective, extended an existing racial project which framed white femininity within civic dimensions to the possible formation of a global democratic system.

By 1921, the Washington Center experienced significant shifts in leadership and focus from its earlier inception in 1912. The early years boasted a flurry of activity under Hazel MacKaye, Glenna Smith Tinnin, and Clara D. Neligh. However, when the national offices for the Drama League of America moved from Chicago to Washington, D.C. in 1917, the focus shifted. As Terry Brino-Dean points out in his study of the League, by 1916, most of the leadership of the national organization were men.⁵⁴ While they sought to replicate many of the same activities the aforementioned women accomplished—including a large pageant on the Washington Mall entitled *Democracy Triumphant*—it does not appear that any of those women participated in this work.⁵⁵ In fact, in the two years the national offices operated in D.C., outside of the occasional performance produced by an amateur troupe affiliated with the Center, the local chapter did very little on its own accord.

⁵⁴ Terry Brino-Dean, "Aesthetic Re/Visioning in the Efforts of the Drama League of America, 1910–1931" (PhD dissertation, Indiana University Press, 2002).

⁵⁵ This was an impressive pageant in its own right. It was designed after a theory of medieval theatre where different scenes were performed at various points throughout the Mall. So as audiences moved from point to point, the cast would re-perform their respective scenes. The pageant culminated with all of the performers coming together in front of the Capitol building, forming a tableaux that indicated the formation of a global, democratic system. See "Mall to Have Big Pageant on July 4: Series of Actions Will Depict 'Democracy Triumphant,'" *Washington Post*, June 7, 1918, 7.

When the national offices moved back to Chicago in 1919, the local chapter elected Mrs. Adele Steiner Burleson as President of the Washington Center. Burleson was not only the wife of the Postmaster General but she was also (as one newspaper wrote) one of the “most active women in the cabinet circle in things aside from society.”⁵⁶ Burleson’s presidency shifted the Washington Center back to the Drama League’s earliest roots: uplifting commercial theater. She focused on arranging social teas for distinguished members of Washington society with theatre artists to elevate local engagement with professional theatre. Burleson hosted the teas in her own home, offering members of the League the chance to meet artists *and* significant figures in Washington society. By November 1919, Frank Morse, the theatre critic of the *Washington Post*, made a joke about how the League’s effort to bulletin plays took a backseat to the significance of the teas.⁵⁷ Under Burleson’s leadership, the Washington Center shifted from large public performances of civic theatre to more intimate domestic performances. However, in both, there remained an attention to training young women through rituals of allegorical spectacles of white femininity. The benefit performance and ball held on the night of Tuesday, January 25, 1921, perpetuated what might be called a domestic allegorical spectacle of white femininity.

The night of the benefit performance featured the return of concerted effort put forth by a variety of women affiliated with the Drama League. Ten amateur actors appeared through the evening’s short acts. While the cast was evenly split between men and women, Sally Fauntleroy Johnson served as the director for all but one of the

⁵⁶ “Society,” *Washington Post*, October 23, 1920, 7.

⁵⁷ Frank Morse, “The Drama League Has a New Idea,” *Washington Post*, November 16, 1919, A4.

plays. The program consisted of four one-acts: *The Gift of the Magi*, *Eugenically Speaking*, *An Unlucky Star*, and *Pearls*. Two plays were written by playwrights in New York, but the first and last acts of the night were put in highlighted positions because they were composed by local playwrights. Both were women active in the Drama League and Washington society. Adele Steiner Burleson kicked off the evening with her adaptation of O. Henry's short story and Elizabeth Noyes Thompson wrote and starred in the finale centering on the harrowing tales of a young actress who chooses to pursue an ambitious career in theatre when her great love grows jealous over her success. While newspapers recognized the presence of the Center's president, Mrs. Daisy Calhoun, most credited the execution of the evening to Mrs. Cabot Stevens.⁵⁸ Stevens was an active member of the League and the beneficiaries from the evening's performance: the Near East Fund, a non-profit organization designed to provide relief to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide.⁵⁹ Cabot's efforts paid off: by the end of the night, she raised \$1400 for the displaced survivors and orphans.

Five hundred members of Washington Society shared Cabot's vision for generosity and attended the festivities at the Salon des Nations in the Hotel Washington, a venue located across the street from the White House and the Treasury

⁵⁸ Jean Eliot, "Society: Drama League Plays Achieve Great Success," *Washington Times*, January 26, 1921, 9; "Four Plays Swell Near East Funds: Drama League Scores Successes in Program Which Society Crowds to Witness," *Washington Post*, January 26, 1921, 3.

⁵⁹ Mrs. Cabot Stevens received recognition for her work raising funds for the Near East Relief Fund when Chief Justice William Howard Taft publicly commended her work in a letter he sent to the publication for the Near East Fund, *The New Near East*. He praised her "campaign for further contributions [...while] the country [was] more or less jaded with a constant call for contributions." See William Howard Taft, "While Resources and Wealth are Abundant--!" *The New Near East* 7, no. 3 (January 1920), 9.

Building. The audience included politicians, ambassadors, and foreign royalty and dignitaries. Stevens also invited and tasked seventeen social debutantes from the District's Junior League with the tasks of ushering the theatrical production and coordinating the social ball that followed.⁶⁰ It is through the eyes of this audience that most of the one-acts and the benefit performance itself constituted one final allegorical spectacle of white femininity orchestrated by the Washington Center. As with previous pageants, the children's theatre, and social teas, the Drama League's night of one-acts instructed and involved young women in proper etiquette, social behavior, and white racial identity and responsibility. Their agency and racial identity were defined by their capacity to engage with a problem on the other side of the world that called on them to provide relief to suffering women and children in Armenia.

The spectacle of the evening presented the general audience and the Junior League volunteers with a series of allegorical virtues embodied rather than personified by young women. More to the point, the virtues that were presented also evoked the white savior trope. The twin virtues presented were "generosity" and "independence," qualities that were again framed as the important qualities to which white women had an innate connection. Both virtues were demonstrated in the one-acts and the performance of charity-fundraising itself. White femininity was particularly seen as a means of providing hope and relief to people of color throughout the world. Furthermore, it reflected the white identity politics laid out in the foreign policy Woodrow Wilson's administration established as he left office.

⁶⁰ "Four Plays Swell Near East Funds," *Washington Post*. January 26, 1921. 3.

After segregating the federal government, Wilson helped outline the racialized political philosophy that undergirded most of America's neocolonial foreign policy in the twentieth century. At least part of that foreign policy was itself built on a white savior complex: seeing it as America's duty to bring civilization and peace to parts of the world torn apart by war and inhabited by people of color. Relief, charity, benefits—they were expressions of a white hope that saw its own morality and capacity for uplift as innate, but occasionally in need of cultivation and prodding.

As with previous allegorical spectacles staged by the women of the Washington Center, staging these virtues asserted cultural representations of white femininity, asserting and teaching that white women with said virtues could and needed to engage with local and global communities. In the work that inspired many early efforts of the Washington Center, the creation of a 1913 suffrage pageant staged in Washington, D.C., women personified (generally feminized) civic virtues, asserting the capacity of women to participate in the democratic process. Generosity and independence were not personified in the benefit performance; but in the system of an allegorical spectacle, they were presented as virtues inherently associated with women. These associations conveyed civic and racial responsibilities.

In terms of content, most of the one-acts for the evening focused on the agency and social power of young women. Eschewing subtlety and embracing the spirit of the winter season, the Drama League started with Burleson's adaptation of *The Gift of the Magi*. O. Henry published the short story in 1905, describing the love of a poor, young married couple. The newlyweds each inadvertently sell their prized possessions in order to afford Christmas presents to augment their respective

partner's most prized possession. O. Henry ends his story comparing the purity of young lovers to the love of Christ and the Magi that brought the Christ Child gifts. As one newspaper author said of Burleson's adaptation, "It was chosen as being particularly appropriate to the spirit of the evening—of a benefit performance for the starving people of the near east, the Bible land."⁶¹ The night was about sacrifice, giving, and love. Significantly, it was also about considering the "Bible Land," or thinking about the victims of the Armenian genocide both in term of the Biblical geography and morality of the Magi. In addition to recounting suffering, much of the rhetoric of the Near East Relief Fund's campaigning emphasized both the Christianity of the Armenians and their geographical proximity to Biblical events. Burleson's adaptation—in play title alone—evoked the victims the benefit was designed to relieve. However, she also altered the story, staging race in a spectacle of gendered generosity.

O. Henry's original story features a character named Madame Sofronie, a heartless hairdresser who cuts off the young bride's hair in exchange for money. O. Henry presents the businesswoman as cold and exploitative, taking advantage of the young woman: truly antithetical to the Christmas spirit. One noteworthy fact is the means by which the reader learns that Madame Sofronie is not to be trusted: she is described as being large, cold, and too white to be a Sofronie. In other words, she lacks the swarthy, dark complexion a truly exotic woman from Italy or Eastern Europe with a name like Sofronie would possess. She pretends to be exotic to

⁶¹ "'Gift of the Magi,' Play for the Near East: Production by Mrs. Burleson to Be Given Tuesday Night--Other Offerings," *Evening Star*, January 23, 1921, 11.

increase her business and by the end is the story's only true antagonist. Burleson's adaptation changed the protagonist of the story, focusing on the husband through his day and sacrifice rather than the wife, but she also significantly altered the character of Sofronie. In the adaptation, Sofronie is presented as a lowly Italian peddler who gives the husband combs for his watch. Following the husband rather than the wife in the narrative makes practical sense: it is easier to stage a man exchanging a gold watch than to show a woman having her long hair cut. But the alteration of Sofronie's character reflects another attempt to craft a spectacle of racial identity.

A photograph in Washington's newspaper, the *Evening Star* features Elizabeth Noyes Thompson as an Italian peddler in rags and on her knees. She is posed as a beggar woman, looking remarkably similar to the iconic images of Armenian refugees circulated by the Near East Relief Fund.⁶² By 1921, Italians were still considered one of the Mediterranean races; which is to say, they were, as David Roediger put it, between whiteness.⁶³ To a white American audience gathered in the Hotel Washington, the Sofronie of Burleson's play was more closely related to the Armenians they raised funds for that evening. Read as an allegorical spectacle, the Sofronie character immediately represented and evoked the victims of the genocide that would benefit from the performance's charity. Unlike O. Henry's manipulative and greedy Sofronie, Burleson's character is staged as the recipient of a gift more valuable than the combs she possessed. The play and the newspaper deliberately

⁶² "To Participate in Performance to be Given by Drama League for Near East and Russian Relief." *Evening Star*, January 23, 1921, 11.

⁶³ See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); David Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

staged the presentation of a precious gift to the Mediterranean woman. For Burleson, the gift of the magi moment occurs not only for the young lovers, but in the exchange where the husband helps out the Italian peddler or the Armenian refugee surrogate. One newspaper wrote that the one-act offered “a big situation blending comedy and pathos with real sincerity.”⁶⁴ The big situation presented staged the responsibility and virtue of generosity, framing that virtue both in global and racialized dimensions. If Burleson had a moral for the Junior League ushers, her allegorical spectacle instructed them in the significance of the racialized and gendered dynamics of their role as white saviors. White femininity was directly connected to their capacity to provide international charity and see themselves as white saviors.

Two other plays of the evening featured the virtue of independence in young women. And while it is worth noting the historical irony and comically poor taste of the Drama League to produce a play entitled *Eugenically Speaking* at a benefit designed to assist the victims of an early twentieth-century genocide, the more pressing reading of the spectacle was its presentation to the Junior League women how modern science was opening new opportunities for their lives, as well as increasing their social and racial responsibilities. In order to increase the availability of dramatic literature and to showcase new works, the national Drama League of America frequently published collections of plays. In 1916, with the twentieth volume of their series, they featured plays written by the Washington Square Players. In that collection, Edward Goodman’s one-act comedy, *Eugenically Speaking*,

⁶⁴ Jean Eliot, “Society: Drama League Plays Achieve Great Success,” *Washington Times*, January 26, 1921, 9.

focuses on a young woman, Una Braithwaite, who brings a handsome, young, working-class, cable-car driver, George Coxey, home to meet her successful, titan businessman father, Mr. Braithwaite. The play opens with Una and George in the Braithwaite home. Una gave George \$100 to leave his job for the day to accompany her home. When her father arrives, Una informs them both of her intentions to marry George. When both men stand stunned, Una explains her inspiration to seek a suitable mate came from reading an article by George Bernard Shaw on eugenics. She proceeds to quote from the article which asserts that when it comes to “having an improvement in the human race,” sexual attraction should trump social circles and class. The article puts forth a thought experiment of a man walking down a street and choosing a mate based on physical attraction. Una contends that the thought experiment can and should apply to a young woman’s pursuit as well. She proceeds to recount how she began volunteering in the city—at missions and lodging houses—before moving on to coal yards and train cars to find a statuesque man. Mr. Braithwaite initially objects, but ultimately acquiesces to his daughter’s pleas. All seems well until George informs them both that he is already married to a woman named Naomi: a girl from a similar background, upbringing, and mindset as Una. Naomi found George at a settlement house and he expresses that he loves her because of her forceful determination to have him against her father’s wishes. The play ends with George blackmailing Mr. Braithwaite to keep quiet about the incident and Una resolving to write a Shaw-esque play.

Una and her eugenic zeal are undoubtedly the joke at the center of the comedy, but ultimately Goodman’s text presents how eugenic science and modernity

allowed the era's new women to create a society with new dimensions for the future. As Tamsen Wolff argues in her history on the connection between eugenics and theatre and the turn of the twentieth century, while much eugenic rhetoric and science was established by men in universities, it was directly applied in society by women. Wolff's history documents how women participated in a number of social activities that instructed them on how to practice positive eugenics—finding partners in their personal lives that would produce children with “good heredity” and incidentally maintain a white racial purity. American eugenicists charged women with a responsibility for shaping future generations of the nation. But young women were also trained as social workers in eugenic methodologies and used theatre in order to disseminate ideas and methods regarding practices that would assist in a project that would ensure racial uplift.⁶⁵ In addition to referencing Shaw, there are a number of times when Una uses the eugenic observational techniques employed at the time. But while the play certainly conveys a tone of levity and invites audiences to laugh at a young woman like Una, the triumph of the unseen character Naomi speaks to the power of the New Woman in a modern world and how the rhetoric and methodologies of eugenics gave women power to shape their lives. Part of what makes George love Naomi is that she was more forceful and demanding than Una. She had far more pluck. While the play indicates that young women should not be silly like Una, it certainly does not undercut the power and agency of young women like Naomi.

⁶⁵ Tamsen Wolff, *Mendel's Theatre: Heredity, Eugenics, and Early Twentieth-Century American Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 55-112.

And while *Eugenically Speaking* presented the agency of young women as a comedy, the final piece of the evening displayed it as a virtue gained through effort, sacrifice, and triumph. The prominent piece for the evening was by Elizabeth Noyes Thompson. Her play *Pearls* featured a young actress who pursues her career by leaving the country for the big city. Eventually, her great love falls in love with another woman back in their small hometown. Apparently, he could not handle the success and fame the protagonist achieved and he wanted a simpler life. She carries on heartbroken but determined in her career. One newspaper wrote of the play, “The idea, as conveyed by the title, is that pearls may be big and flashy and still be real. But that very ‘few men understand—about pearls.’”⁶⁶ Unlike Goodman’s Una, the independence of Thompson’s young actress is not a joke. As the newspaper and the line from the play reflect, it is not without its cost since men do not understand the concept; however, that lack of men’s understanding does not detract from the reality of the pearl and the virtue presented. The final play of the evening showed the women of the Junior League a big and flashy spectacle of independence. And as the final applause rang, the debutantes of the Junior League went to work transitioning the audience and players to the social ball that followed.

The line from Thompson’s play is ultimately a great way to think about the efforts of Burleson, Stevens, and the other women of the Washington Center in its final years. The social teas and a one-night benefit performance were not civic pageants or professional theatre. As Dororthy Chansky has argued, because amateur

⁶⁶ “‘Gift of the Magi,’ Play for the Near East: Production by Mrs. Burleson to Be Given Tuesday Night--Other Offerings,” *Evening Star*, January 23, 1921, 11.

performance has been gendered as feminine, it has often been left out of theatre historiography.⁶⁷ But in 1921, the benefit raised \$1400 for the Near East Relief Fund. And ultimately, the evening educated the young women of the Junior League by exposing them to an allegorical spectacle of white femininity. The Drama League did not only stage that spectacle in the one-act performances highlighting the virtues of generosity and independence, but also through the entire structure of the evening as a benefit performance for the international community. The women of the Washington Center spent years using civic theatre to cultivate young women's awareness of their presence and responsibility within a community in the district. Through the allegorical spectacle presented on January 25, 1921, the women of the Drama League demonstrated to the members of the Junior League that white femininity included activity and citizenship in a global community located beyond local and national boundaries.

Coda: On Spectacle in a Twenty-First-Century March

On Saturday, January 21, 2017, the Women's March on Washington was held on the Mall and throughout the city the day after the Inauguration of Donald Trump. An estimated 500,000 men, women, and children gathered on the Washington Mall and throughout the streets of the city to protest the election of Trump, comments he made about women before and throughout his presidential campaign, and the policies the Republican Party called for in their platform. An estimated 2.4 million more

⁶⁷ Dorothy Chansky, *Composing Ourselves: Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and the American Audience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

protesters congregated in sister marches held in other cities and towns not only throughout the United States, but also around the world. The massive demonstration slightly dwarfed the participation and scope of the 1913 suffrage march, but certainly illustrated Glenna Smith Tinnin's point that a parade has the capacity to manifest the size of support for the purpose of animating the gathering.

The event was sparked from a post shared by a woman in a closed Facebook group called Pantsuit Nation. In the months leading up to the election, Pantsuit Nation provided a virtual space for women throughout the county to post news items or articles that related to the group's support of Hillary Rodham Clinton's presidential candidacy. Rodham Clinton acknowledged the group in her concession speech. After the election, one post of frustration from a woman in Hawai'i and an articulation to march garnered attention and sparked more deliberate organizational efforts to make sure the march happened. Almost immediately from the outset, there were conversations about the inclusivity of the demonstration. A few feminists of color critiqued the fact that most of the women that belonged to Pantsuit Nation were primarily white. When early names for the march were floated and some initially called it the Million Women's March, there was a discussion about whether or not that was an appropriation of the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., a protest organized by African American men in 1995, or the Million Woman March in Philadelphia, a protest organized by African American women in 1997. In the span of two months, there were many virtual conversations about acknowledging intersectional feminism and making sure that white feminists were not the only ones organizing the event or represented by the demonstration.

When I attended the March in Washington, I did not anticipate how many people would be present. It did not appear that the organizers did either. The group I was with waited on the corner of 3rd St SW and Maryland Ave SW for over an hour waiting for the march towards the White House to begin. We could see the dais where various presenters were talking set up on Independence Avenue, but the sound system did not project their speeches to us. We passed the time talking to other people who had come and looking at the various signs people had created and brought with them. My husband pointed out to me one sign that read “My Great Grandmother marched in 1913. 100 YEARS LATER? STILL MARCHING FOR EQUALITY.” As the time passed, however, the protestors in our section grew restless with the fact that we had not started marching yet. The plan was for the March to start around 1:15 PM. People would head down Independence Avenue, walk by the Washington Monument, head up 17th St SW, walk down E Street in front of the White House, and end at the intersection of 15th St SW and Pennsylvania—the intersection where the suffragettes were supposed to arrive in 1913. But that did not end up happening. There were too many people for the march to unfold as planned. Independence Avenue was packed from 3rd St SW to 17th St SW. All other areas were overrun as well. There was no room to march. Eventually, various waves of protesters at different times throughout the day made their way towards the White House via Pennsylvania Avenue. It was a powerful sight.

Debates before and after the demonstration touched on the March’s efficacy and, as mentioned, the degree to which it was representative. One of the debates that unfolded in the conversation revolved around the topic of spectacle within the larger

spectacle of the march itself. Days before the event, Petula Dvorak, a columnist for the *Washington Post*, explained on *The Kojo Nnamdi Show* her concerns about some of the spectacular elements that many women were planning and how that played into the type of tone that was set for the occasion.⁶⁸ Dvorak explained that she saw the march as an articulation of anxiety, a chance for women to gather and show by strength of number that many people were concerned about what the election of Donald Trump means for the future of women's rights in the United States. She found that as the projected numbers for the event swelled, there seemed to be an effort to inject levity and celebration into the march. Pink hats were knitted, street theatre was planned, and glitter-decorated signs were made. Dvorak suggested that by emphasizing symbolism the march risked sacrificing political efficacy for the sake of spectacle. She particularly singled out the Pussyhat Project, a movement where women made millions of pink hats with cat ears that marchers could wear in the cold January air. The hats were also made to resemble a woman's reproductive organs. Dvorak wrote in the *Washington Post*, "The Women's March of 2017 will be remembered as an unruly river of Pepto-Bismol roiling through the streets of the capital rather than a long overdue civil rights march."⁶⁹ She did not take issue with the impulse to perform but rather critiqued that the very novelty that could spark interest in issues in the first place also has a way of quickly wearing off rather than

⁶⁸ "Ahead of the Women's March, A Debate about the Right Tone of a Protest," *The Kojo Nnamdi Show*, January 16, 2017, <http://thekojonnamdishow.org/shows/2017-01-16/ahead-of-the-womens-march-a-debate-about-the-right-tone-of-a-protest>, accessed January 19, 2017.

⁶⁹ Petula Dvorak, "The Women's March Needs Passion and Purpose, not Pink Pusycat Hats," *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-womens-march-needs-passion-and-purpose-not-pink-pusycat-hats/2017/01/11/6d7e75be-d842-11e6-9a36-1d296534b31e_story.html?utm_term=.2ed900fcc96a, accessed January 19, 2017.

manifesting into substantive change. There were indeed many pink Pussyhats that day.

That spirit of levity and material irony worn by the protesters also concerned some feminists of color. Chissy Nkemere, for example, critiqued the outpouring of support for the Women's March for revealing the lack of an equivalent support among liberal protestors for the Black Lives Matter demonstrations held throughout the last few years. She wrote,

The women who now deny the president Americans voted into office (popular vote be damned) scream loudly for their reproductive rights, donning knit pink pussy hats and carrying cleverly worded signs. But where were these women for Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, India Monroe, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Miriam Carey, Tanisha Anderson, Eric Garner, Deeniquia Dodds, and Trayvon Martin?⁷⁰

Nkemere recognizes that as the weeks went by, more women of color were included in the decision-making process and represented on the roster of speakers. But the disparity in presence and commitment is striking. And central to her characterization of the white feminists that concern her is both the materials they created and the enthusiasm they performed. She notes the hats and the clever signs. They are material things and crafts created for the purpose of the day. And they reflected a playful and optimistic energy. They were worn in anger, despair, or concern, but they helped the protestor perform hope. As Nkemere hints, there is particular racialized dimension to that articulation of hope.

As in 1913, the feminism and political protest that took shape in 2017 was in light of the unanticipated presidential election results. Moving forward, how women

⁷⁰ Chissy Nkemere, "Why I Will Always Be Conflicted About the Women's March on Washington," *Bustle*, January 31, 2017, <https://www.bustle.com/p/why-i-will-always-be-conflicted-about-the-womens-march-on-washington-34476>, accessed February 2, 2017.

organize and articulate the need for social change will be impacted by many things, but they will definitely be informed by the presence and actions of the Trump administration.⁷¹ The Wilson's administration impacted the racial and gender politics of the nation and the local reality of those making a living in Washington, D.C. First-wave feminists responded to the changes they instituted, often by adopting the segregationist policies of the administration in order to push forward a political agenda that benefited white women. In the twenty-first century, racial and gender identity politics in the United States will continue to produce material consequences for people living in the country and throughout the world. At the writing of this dissertation, multiple protests of the Trump administration have already been planned in Washington, D.C. for the rest of 2017. As they move forward and as residents of Washington, D.C. participate in them, it will be worth continuing to reflect on how the material objects used and created play a role in the racial and gender politics of the city and the nation.

⁷¹ For what it is worth, I have continually thought about the irony of history. Under the direction of Albert Burleson, the Wilson's administration pushed segregationist policies through the federal Post Office. Burleson's racist utopia was materialized in the Post Office Building on Pennsylvania Avenue, the structure that as of this writing was recently renovated and reopened as a Trump International Hotel.



Figure 1. Glenna Smith Tinnin and Hazel MacKaye. 1913. Harris & Ewing, photographer. *MacKaye, Miss Hazel. Playwright. Right, with Miss Glenna Tinnen.* 1913. Image. Retrieve from the Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/item/hec2008001296/>. (Accessed February 5, 2017).



Figure 2. Parade Processional from 1913 March on Pennsylvania Avenue. *Head of suffrage parade, Washington, D.C. March 3, 1913.* Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/97500042/>. (Accessed February 5, 2017).



Figure 3. Hedwig Reicher as Colombia in *Allegory*. [German actress Hedwig Reicher wearing costume of "Colombia" with other suffrage pageant participants standing in background in front of the Treasury Building, March 3, 1913, Washington, D.C.]. [March 3, 1913] Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/97510759/>. (Accessed February 5, 2017).



Figure 4. Colombia gathers with the Virtues. *Tableau presented by the Women's Suffrage Asso., Treasury steps, March 3rd, 1913, Wash. D.C. 1913.* Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/92515984/>. Accessed February 5, 2017.



Figure 5. Young female attendants of the Virtues in front of the Treasury Building. *Scene from a tableau held on the Treasury steps in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the Woman's suffrage procession on March 3, 1913.* March 3, 1913. Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002722837/>. Accessed February 5, 2017.

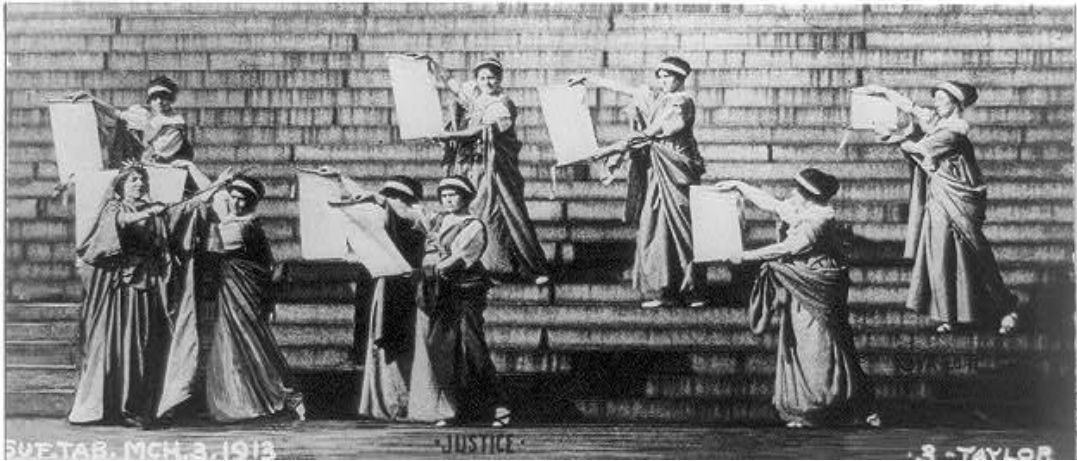


Figure 6. A tableau of Justice and her attendants in *Allegory*. Scene from a tableau held on the Treasury steps in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the Woman's suffrage procession on March 3, 1913. March 3, 1913. Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/2002722838/>. (Accessed February 5, 2017).

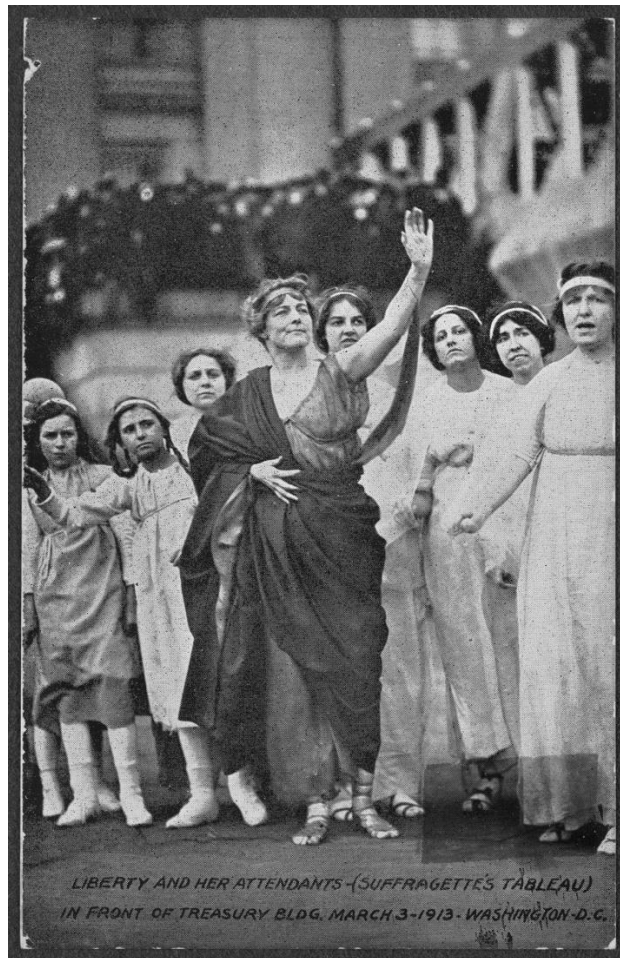


Figure 7. A tableau of Liberty and her attendants in *Allegory*. L & M Ottenheimer, Baltimore, MD. *Liberty and her Attendants – Suffragette's Tableau in Front of Treasury Bldg. March 3, 1913 – Washington, D.C. Mar. 3, 1913*. Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000279/>. (Accessed February 5, 2017).



Figure 8. Columbia, Uncle Sam, and Liberty in *Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party*. Harris & Ewing. "Tableau at the close of 'Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday party,' showing Columbia, Uncle Sam, Liberty and one of the Minute Men." Printed in a *Theatre Magazine* article. See Ethel M. Smith, "Pageantry and the Drama League," *The Theatre Magazine* 18 (November 1913): 171-73.



Figure 9. Columbia, Liberty, Uncle Sam, and Uncle Sam Child. Image published in newspaper article. "Principle Feature of Washington's 'Safe and Sane' Fourth of July." *Evening Star*, July 5, 1913. 2. Image. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1913-07-05/ed-1/seq-2/>. Accessed by February 5, 2017.



Figure 10. Photograph of adult and child Uncle Sam. They performed in the pageant. "Principle Feature of Washington's 'Safe and Sane' Fourth of July." *Evening Star*. July 5, 1913. 2. Image. Retrieved from Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Library of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1913-07-05/ed-1/seq-2/>. Accessed by February 5, 2017.



Figure 11. Photograph of a performer dressed as flamingo with puppets of animals. On her left there is an alligator and on her right, a buffalo. "Principle Feature of Washington's 'Safe and Sane' Fourth of July." *Evening Star*. July 5, 1913. 2. Image. Retrieved from Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Library of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1913-07-05/ed-1/seq-2/>. Accessed by February 5, 2017.



Figure 12. Photograph of Flowers, a gift of the Far West states. Harris & Ewing. "Tableau of Far West States Presenting Gift of Flowers." Printed in a *Theatre Magazine* article. See Ethel M. Smith, "Pageantry and the Drama League," *The Theatre Magazine* 18 (November 1913): 171-73.



Figure 13. Photograph of procession of Women dressed as States in pageant. Harris & Ewing. "Procession of Women as States in Uncle Sam's 137th Birthday Party." Printed in a *Theatre Magazine* article. See Ethel M. Smith, "Pageantry and the Drama League," *The Theatre Magazine* 18 (November 1913): 171-73.



Figure 14. Rehearsal Photo from *The Gift of the Magi* at 1921 Performance. "To Participate in Performances to be Given by Drama League for Near East and Russian Relief." *The Sunday Star*. January 23, 1921. 11. Image. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1921-01-23/ed-1/seq-11/>. Accessed by February 5, 2017.

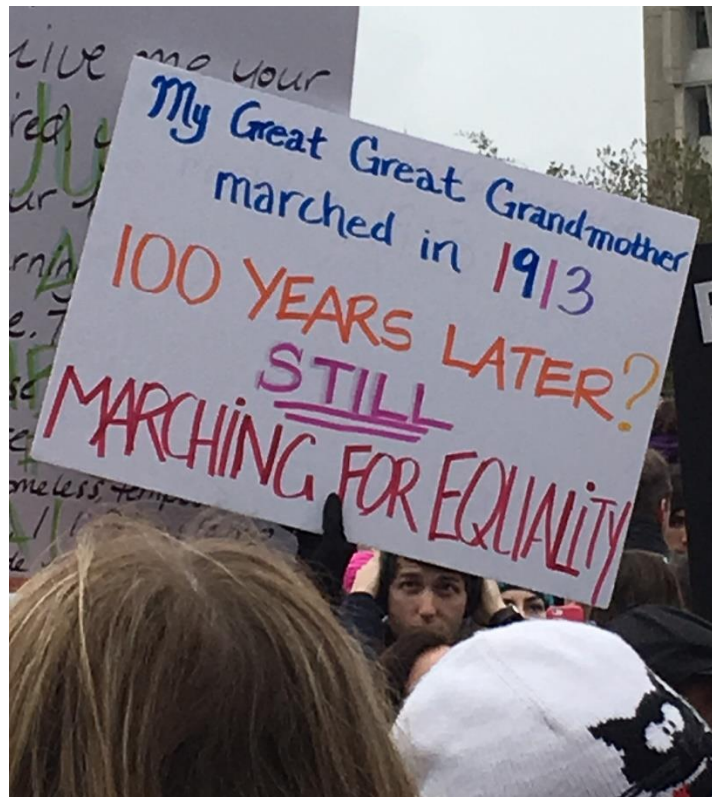


Figure 15. A sign from 2017 Women's March on Washington. Photograph taken by Allan Davis on January 21, 2017 at Women's March on Washington near corner of 3rd St SW and Maryland Ave SW.

Chapter 3: The Pasadena Drama League: Performing American Orientalism in Private Residential Gardens

On May 29, 2015, a new musical called *Waterfall* premiered at the Pasadena Playhouse. The Playhouse, a historically successful institution representative of the Little Theatre Movement, exists because of the work of women who belonged to the Pasadena Center of the Drama League. Although the chapter of the Pasadena Drama League disbanded in 1932, the Playhouse remains, memorializing how the League and its members shaped the city of Pasadena. A marker hanging on the outside of the theatre lists the Pasadena Center and many of its prominent members as contributors to its construction. While in Pasadena for archival research, I decided to take a tour of the Playhouse and attended a Saturday matinee performance of *Waterfall*.

The musical is an adaptation of the famous Thai romance novel *Behind the Painting (Khang Lang Phap)* by Kulap Saipradit. The novel has been adapted to theatrical stages and cinematic screens before, but the musical *Waterfall* was an English adaptation of an existing Thai musical adaptation as well as the first iteration of the story intended for a US audience. The production that premiered at the Pasadena Playhouse combined the efforts of the lyricist Richard Maltby, Jr. (who co-wrote the lyrics for *Miss Saigon*), the composer David Shire, the Broadway and Bangkok director Tak Viravan, and the Thai pop star Bie Sukrit. Sukrit and Viravan had worked on the earlier musical adaptation in Thailand.

Waterfall, like its source material, tells the story of a young Thai man in the 1930s who travels to Japan for an education. While there, he falls in love with the wife of a Thai diplomat and the drama of forbidden love ensues. The political climate

of the Empire of Japan provided some context and impetus to the development of plot and character, but overall its choice as a setting more often justified elaborate, colorful, and at times exotifying pageants of Japanese culture. The musical includes a scene where a male Japanese diplomat chastises the European American female lead for wearing a kimono because she likes its color without understanding its cultural significance. However, most of the show tries to have its kimono and wear it too, decrying appropriation while continually exoticizing Japan.

Overall, the production was a fantastic romantic melodrama with elaborate costumes and set pieces. There were innumerable costume changes. And some set pieces, like a train locomotive, were brought on stage for only 45 seconds, disappeared, and never returned. The titular waterfall, a significant spot for the lovers at the center of the story, is one of the engineering marvels of the musical's spectacle. However, it is also at the heart of the story and key to understanding the musical's representation of Japan. Narratively, the waterfall sequence, which includes a song and dance with a live artificial waterfall on stage, ends the first act as the lovers acknowledge their desires for each other. The waterfall and its surrounding woods are later painted by the woman to remember their secret passion. Years after the lovers have parted and the woman has died, the man comes into possession of the painting as a reminder of that lost love. The engineering marvel of the waterfall is the crown jewel in the cornucopia of the musical's stage spectacle and the show revolves around that event as defining for its lead characters.

The natural space where the lovers can escape from civilization is, ostensibly, the one moment when the spectacle does not seek to represent a particular culture.

The lovers have left kimonos and Japanese drummers behind, adventuring out into the mountains where they eventually come upon the secluded area, find the waterfall, and embrace their passions. However, with beautiful foliage illuminated by a great lighting design, artificial rocks prepared by gifted scene shop technicians, and a waterfall that manages to be serene and commanding without deafening out the sound of the actors and orchestra, the ultimate spectacle of *Waterfall* is of a pristine Japanese garden. It is itself another display of the cultural pageant, one that perpetuates a fantasy that has a long history in the formation of Southern California, geographically and socially.

The exotification and romanticization of East Asian culture, particularly Japanese culture, through private residential gardens at the turn of the twentieth century allowed white women to contribute to the formation of American Orientalism in racialized and gendered terms. As Mari Yoshihara has argued, white American women at the turn of the century helped shape “American discourses about China and Japan in diverse sites of cultural production and consumption, including material culture, visual arts, performing arts, literature, and anthropology.”¹ She argues they were able to do so because relationships between the United States and East Asia were changing *and* because the discourses about East Asia already operated on a logic informed by gender politics. “White women,” Yoshihara continues, “played

¹ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6. Like Yoshihara, in my use of the word Orientalism, I am referring specifically to U.S. discourse about China and Japan during the period of U.S. empire-building in Asia-Pacific, not a consideration of European discourse’s construction of territories in the Middle East. However, like the work done by Edward Said’s pivotal work on Orientalism, U.S. presentations and discussions of East Asia articulated paradigms that objectified, exotified, homogenized, and feminized the people and places they referenced.

pivotal roles in inscribing gendered meanings to Asia, both complicating and replicating the dominant Orientalist discourse founded upon the notion of ‘West = male vs. East = female.’”² Women used their gender to articulate a natural affinity for and connection to East Asian cultures. This provided them a means of gaining cultural authority to shape the discourses and understanding of China and Japan, an access to sociopolitical agency they were otherwise denied and which had immediate impact on the lives of people living in the United States who were of East Asian descent. While white men shaped laws in the California state legislature and argued cases before the Supreme Court to limit the access of Asian immigrants to citizenship and whiteness, women contributed to a material landscape that legitimized and authenticated the rhetoric of American Orientalism. Gardens were a primary site that allowed them to enact that social process. Amateur performances staged in those residential gardens allowed a private domestic space to become a public venue for white women to enact agency at the turn of the twentieth century.

Southern California and cities like Pasadena were built by European Americans who migrated from the Midwest and eastern United States. They altered the landscape to realize their vision of a new land. Fueled by Japan’s own imperial ascendancy and cultural propagation, some of the most pervasive dreams for affluent California transplants reflected an Orientalist imagination.³ East Asian gardens, particularly Japanese gardens, typified a sense of mystery, femininity, and purity in

² Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 6.

³ The Empire of Japan was very active in participating in various World’s Fairs, highlighting the work of various Japanese craftsmen as well as the cultural and natural beauty of Japan. For example, they formally gifted Washington, D.C. with cherry trees in 1912, which First Lady Helen “Nallie” Taft planted along the Tidal Basin in the city.

the era of modernity. When many Gilded Age tycoons built personal estates and erected public parks designed after Italianate designs, other architects and park enthusiasts advocated for the “mystery, alternate spiritual and imaginative realms, and perceived femininity” in Japanese gardens.⁴ The Japanese gardens were the feminine companions to more masculine European (Italian) designs. In Southern California, white women adopted the style in their residential gardens. And they were able to do so with the help of male Japanese immigrants who were barred by the California government from owning land.

The musical *Waterfall* indicates how the romantic lure embedded in the spectacle of the Japanese garden still holds power in the imagination of a Southern California city like Pasadena. The play was no doubt arranged on the season to expand the audience base of the Playhouse to include more Asian Americans, particularly those with connections to Southeast Asia that would recognize a Thai pop star. Their marketing material appeared in English and Thai. Yet the theatrical staging still presented an American Orientalist vision of Japan and Thailand. The garden, as a gendered site, figures into the power and significance of the romance. It is life altering and shaping. The Pasadena Playhouse is fundamentally important in the history of the Pasadena Drama League. However, in this chapter I do not focus on the Playhouse or on instances of American Orientalism being staged in legitimate or professional theatre spaces like the Playhouse. Instead, I focus on how the women of the Pasadena Center used amateur performances and their private gardens between

⁴ Wade Graham, *American Eden: From Monticello to Central Park to Our Backyards, What Are Gardens Tell Us About Who We Are* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 162

1918 and 1922 to contribute and control narratives of American Orientalism and whiteness. Unlike theatrical representations, the tangible and material reality of the gardens authenticated the racialized and gendered identities that white women created. Gardens provided women with a liminal space that collapsed distinctions between public and private spaces, and performing East Asian identities allowed women to contribute to the formation of the construction of gendered racial identities.

We Built This City: A History of the Pasadena Drama League

Outside of Chicago and New York City, the Pasadena Center of the Drama League was arguably the most successful local chapter of the organization. Active between 1916 and 1932, the Pasadena Center experimented with sponsoring a wide variety of projects including play readings, community dances, and lecture series. However, after they helped open the Pasadena Playhouse, the city transformed into a crown jewel in the landscape of American community theatre, reflecting the aspirations of every active center. After the national Drama League shifted its focus from uplifting professional theatre to supporting amateur performance and the Little Theatre Movement, many centers throughout the country attempted to raise funds to build permanent stages to house their amateur players and produce theatrical works. Most never saw their dreams come true, but the Pasadena Drama League was instrumental in raising the funds for the building's construction and for providing volunteer labor necessary for its operation.

The rarity of the accomplishment has shaped the role the theater space plays in the history of the Pasadena Center that has been written. Karen Blair's book *The*

Torchbearers provides the best existing history of the Pasadena Drama League. She argues that histories of the Pasadena Playhouse ignored the contributions of the women for the sake of celebrating the theatre's artistic director, Gilmor Brown. Far from rare, Blair contends this is the case with the histories for most little theatres. Her chapter on the Pasadena Center reflects meticulous archival work, providing a wealth of information regarding members of the League and various activities the group sponsored or organized over the years.⁵ However, by elevating the significance of the Playhouse as the key accomplishment of the Center, her history obscured the fact that the theatre's construction was not a singular, ecstatic triumph. Instead, it was emblematic of a wide variety of activities spearheaded by the Drama League chapter in the Southern Californian city. In that vein, it is worth considering the measure of success the Pasadena Playhouse enjoyed relative to other artistic and civic endeavors to which the women of the Pasadena Center contributed.

With the Playhouse's construction in 1925, the Pasadena Drama League created an internationally renowned venue and shared a symbiotic relationship with the theater. Under the artistic direction of Gilmor Brown, the Playhouse's formal season each year from September to May included a new show every two weeks. The theatre became famous for staging all of Shakespeare's plays, producing the world premiere of Eugene O'Neill's *Lazarus Laughed*, and launching a school that trained theatre artists and actors in theatre and film. In 1933, while visiting Southern California and the Playhouse, George Bernard Shaw reportedly dubbed Pasadena the

⁵ Karen J. Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations, 1890-1930* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1994), 143-177.

“Athens of the West.”⁶ And in 1937, the California legislature voted to recognize the Pasadena Playhouse as the official State Theater of California. As key players in the institution, the Pasadena Drama League retained office space in the Playhouse from 1925 to 1932. They held rehearsals, staged readings, and hosted lectures in the theatre spaces at the Playhouse. The Playhouse published the Pasadena Center’s bimonthly bulletin in their theatre programs and designated the first or second night of a show’s run as Drama League night. Those evenings, tickets were set aside solely for members of the Drama League and their guests. The Pasadena Center managed a library in the theatre where they provided other amateur players and little theatres assistance in finding plays to produce.⁷ The Pasadena Drama League helped to build the Playhouse and provided free labor for all aspects of the theatre’s operation. In return, the Playhouse provided the Pasadena Center with space and resources to carry on their work in the community until the organization disbanded in 1932.

In many respects, building and managing the Playhouse was a defining goal of the Pasadena Drama League and central to its history. Prior to the Center’s formal organization, citizens of Pasadena who supported the vision of the Drama League of America belonged to the Drama League chapter in Los Angeles for 3 years. But in 1916, after gaining enough members and building an active collaboration with a local theatre troupe managed by Gilmore Brown, 102 Pasadena residents met and formed their own chapter. Within a year of creating the Pasadena Drama League, many of the

⁶ Tom Ogden, *Haunted Theatres: Playhouse Phantoms, Opera House Horrors, and Broadway Banshees* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2009), 62.

⁷ The Huntington Library holds an extensive archive of materials representative of the Playhouse’s early era, including an almost complete collection of the programs the Playhouse published every two weeks.

same individuals worked with Brown to form the Pasadena Community Playhouse Association. The two organizations remained distinct and operated with separate leadership, yet they worked towards similar goals. Their main shared interest was the creation of a permanent and prominent theatre structure where the professional actors from Brown's original troupe could collaborate with amateur performers in the region.

Blair argues that because the Los Angeles Center created bulletins showcasing and praising works in professional venues throughout the greater Los Angeles area, Pasadena was free to explore other activities, particularly its endeavors to facilitate the construction, management, and operation of the Pasadena Playhouse. At the time, Pasadena had four professional theatres in operation which occasionally received attention in the Los Angeles bulletins. The Pasadena Community Players primarily performed in the Savoy Theatre, an abandoned burlesque theatre with a metal roof. They also staged some work at the auditorium of the Shakespeare Club, another Pasadena amateur arts association interested in drama. But in June 1924, while the National Drama League of America held its annual convention in Pasadena, Brown and members of the League broke ground for the Playhouse. Completed within a year's time, the Playhouse opened for its first season in 1925 and the collaboration between the Drama League and the Playhouse continued for seven more years.

Before the Playhouse opened, the Pasadena Center occupied itself with a flurry of activities. They experimented with different events, staging garden plays, inaugurating community dances, and holding staged readings in English and in French. They helped make sure that Brown had enough money and volunteers to

ensure the success of the Playhouse, but they demonstrated a lasting commitment to actively shaping the development of Pasadena. They organized and staged a variety of performances throughout the city and those performances generated the demand for permanent institutions, structures, and spaces. In addition to the Playhouse, impressive municipal buildings erected through their efforts included the Public Library and the Civic Auditorium located at the center of the city. Affluent members like Eleanor Bissell and Greta Blanchard Millikan independently contributed to the building of other key landmarks including the Throop Memorial Universalist Church, the California Institute of Technology, and the Huntington Garden and Gallery. Certainly, the structures were made possible because of their wealth and discretionary income; however, the city facilitated the completion of these projects because of the good will and larger community interest that the League engendered. The Playhouse is a great example of this process, but so is the Civic Auditorium because it was a structure born of other performances organized by the Pasadena Center: the summer community dances.

The most consistent and best-attended events the Pasadena Center planned were the Community Dances they hosted each summer. The League first organized the dances in 1920, hosting them on the tennis courts of Tournament Park directly south of the CalTech Campus. The Members of the Pasadena Drama League oversaw the management and chaperoned the dances. The original leader championing the community dances was Eleanor Bissell, the second president of the Pasadena Drama League and one of its most consistent officers. She proposed the dances to encourage civic involvement, healthy recreation, and moral summer leisure among adolescents.

Years later, another president of the Pasadena Drama League, Greta Millikan, used the revenue generated by the dances to pay the Drama League Librarian at the Pasadena Playhouse. When the Pasadena Center dissolved in 1932, the remaining leaders and members of the league reorganized as the Community Dance Association, ensuring the dances would continue year round—which they did well after World War II. The community dances were a significant contribution the Pasadena Center gave to the city. According to early newspaper articles, in 1920 and 1921, the dances regularly saw 1200 to 1400 people in attendance. Highly respectable members of Pasadena society—generally families of the professors at CalTech University or people who frequently vacationed in Pasadena—often attended. Nine Friday nights of dance and the people of the Crown City were hooked. Articles quote local government officials who expressed their interest in building a \$15,000 pavilion for the dances after one successful year. In 1931, with the assistance of its citizens, the local government constructed a large civic auditorium in the center of the city as a more permanent pavilion for the events.

The Pasadena Drama League organized performances which cultivated a desire for spaces to be created in the municipal landscape of Pasadena. Blair's history documents that process in the creation of the Playhouse. The shows they helped Brown stage in the Savoy Theatre and at the Shakespeare Club, to say nothing of their own amateur performances at the Shakespeare Club, generated enthusiasm culminating in the Playhouse. But that same process was present in the creation of the Civic Auditorium through the organization of the community dances. The League's lectures and staged readings held at the old Public Library were very well-attended.

The newer Public Library that opened in 1927 became part of the Civic Center along with the Auditorium and City Hall, offering more room for lectures and group meetings for various organizations in the city. The library was also possible because of the funding and support by individual members of the Drama League and the League itself as a body. The amateur performances staged by the Drama League shaped the development of Pasadena's municipal landscape. Women like Eleanor Bissell and Greta Millikan organized those performances and raised money from residents of the city for the construction of spaces that still exist in Pasadena. By moving beyond the centrality of the Playhouse, the rest of Pasadena's municipal and residential landscape comes into view.

In addition to building permanent structures, the women of the Drama League also built and used residential gardens as performance spaces. As individual citizens, each one cultivated her own garden, reflecting the larger history and social forces that informed the generation of gardens in Southern California. As a group, the Pasadena Drama League used residential gardens as spaces to stage garden plays that they could invite members of the group and greater community to come see. In the years before the completion of the Pasadena Playhouse, residential gardens belonging to members of the Center offered sites of performance as often as indoor structures like the Shakespeare Club, the Savoy Theatre, or the older Public Library. Their decision to stage a play in a garden often coincided with a significant event that warranted celebration: the completion of a season, the arrival of a distinguished guest or theatre artist, or the premiere of a new play by a member of the League. The Pasadena Drama League was by no means innovative in their decision to stage theatre in a garden

setting. There is a long history of outdoor drama in gardens. They are distinct in their pattern of choice, namely their fascination with Orientalist themes, and in the implications of the socio-historical development of residential gardens in Southern California.

In short, between 1918 and 1922, the women of the Pasadena Drama League repeatedly staged early twentieth-century Orientalist representations of East Asia. Why did Pasadena women like Eleanor Bissell offer their gardens as sites of performance? How did staging Orientalist visions of Asia allow the women of one migrant population (from the Eastern and Midwestern United States) respond to the immigration of East Asians, particularly from Japan, into California? How might an examination of Orientalist garden plays inform an understanding of the formation of white racial identities beyond the bounds of the black/white binary? The women of the Pasadena Center played an important role in building the Pasadena Playhouse, itself a mighty contribution to theatre history. However, it was in the smaller spaces of their private residential gardens that they forged ideas and visions of racial categories and identity. Gardens, both figurative and literal, are sites of power. In order to analyze the gendered racial identities the Pasadena Center explored and articulated in their performances, the presence and roles of gardens in Orientalist representations and in the history of Southern California must be detailed.

On Gardening: Cultivating Gendered Whiteness through Orientalist Art and Asian American Labor

Gardens are key sites where racial identities and relationships are forged, often in gendered terms. They are unique social spaces where imagined landscapes are physically manifested. They are simultaneously real in their materiality and artificial in their cultivation. They provide the privacy of seclusion while existing as public displays of wealth or power. For Michel Foucault, gardens represent a perfect example of a heterotopic space where “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”⁸ At the turn of the twentieth century, private residential gardens particularly became a space where women had power to represent and contest the world around them. Gardens, particularly those in Southern California, are important sites to examine intersections between gender and the formation of whiteness because their history challenges a tendency to analyze whiteness along a black/white binary. Creating private gardens and staging plays within those artificial spaces depended on both the ideas Anglo American women had about East Asian cultures and the hidden labor of Asian American immigrants. Gardens became heterotopic sites where white women could utilize Orientalist discourses, images, material culture, and fantasies to articulate their visions of white femininity.

Like most heterotopic spaces, gardens stage utopic visions while carrying within themselves the contradictions and fractures embedded in that vision. In the United States, nature itself and gardens by association have long carried and

⁸ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16, no 1 (1986): 24.

perpetuated the legacy of Romanticism. Part of that tradition includes ideals regarding spiritual renewal, authenticity, and self-discovery. However, it also includes ideological discourses predicated on racial segregation. In the early twentieth century, as a rising middle class privatized gardens, they became sites where Anglo American women shaped their ideals about culture and citizenry. In the case of Southern California, they did so through the labor of male Japanese immigrants. Gardens have a significant history as sites of intersectionality where Anglo American women cultivated images and ideas about whiteness.

While few scholars have explored gardens in terms of sites of intersectionality, others examining the history of whiteness in the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century have indicated the role nature came to play in the formation of racial identities. As immigrants and African Americans moved into cities, upper and middle-class Anglo Americans increasingly emphasized the importance of preserving and visiting “natural spaces” outside of centers of modernity and civilization. In her book *Making Whiteness*, Grace Elizabeth Hale argues that the conservation movement that established national parks reflected a trend in a larger culture of segregation. Hale suggests that while Northeastern and Midwestern parts of the United States did not pass Jim Crow laws legislating segregation, they did purchase and consume an increasing number of goods that perpetuated a culture of segregation which romanticized Southern plantation life and the experiences of African Americans. National parks—removed from city life, modernity, and the presence of multiple racial and ethnic communities—became another iteration of this culture of

segregation.⁹ And in *Playing Indian*, Philip Deloria suggests how camping and hiking (particularly in organizations like the Boy Scouts) made newly manufactured natural spaces important in the maturation of an American identity that was racially white and masculinely gendered.¹⁰ National parks became sites to develop white male identities, segregated from racial and gendered others.

Gardens, just as manufactured as national parks, are a significant corollary to incorporate into the existing literature on whiteness at the turn of the twentieth century. While gardens have certainly been recognized and studied as femininely gendered spaces, less has been said about their historical function as a site of intersectionality. The white racial identities of women like Eleanor Bissell or Dorothy Hinds who owned, maintained, and presented gardens is generally acknowledged. But their racial identity was more than incidental. Gardens allowed the women to craft the parameters of their white racial identities. But in addition to being havens of white flight in a larger culture of segregation, private residential gardens, particularly in Southern California, reflected a process for preserving and cultivating whiteness in relation to Orientalist fantasies and East Asian immigration.

Private gardens allowed white women to physically manifest their Orientalist imaginations that were created through what historian John Kuo Wei Tchen called “patrician Orientalism.”¹¹ Most ideas and images American men and women had of East Asia, particularly China and Japan, came through the accumulation of goods that

⁹ Elizabeth Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 3-12, 241-280.

¹⁰ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 95-127.

¹¹ John Kuo Wai Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), xx.

were appreciated for their exotic design, bright colors, and craftsmanship. *Chinoiserie* and *Japonisme* led women to collect the artistic materiality of an exotic and curious East Asia consisting of kimonos, woodblocks, and visual art.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a confluence of events encouraged an increased interest in Japonism, contributing to the rise in “popular” Orientalism in America or what John Tchen has referred to as “commercial Orientalism.” European art, particularly visual art movements in France, were heavily influenced by increased contact with Japan. French artists generated styles that copied the techniques or evoked the imagery of the mysterious empire in the East. Such European styles in visual art and architectural design became representative of elevated taste that Americans duly copied. Americans increasingly purchased visual art inspired by French Japonism, but they also decorated their homes with an abundance of material goods either made in Japan or created in Japanese styles. This included Japanese porcelain, decorative fans, woodcut prints, kimonos, and garden designs. Productions of shows like David Belasco’s *Madame Butterfly* or Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Mikado* further popularized the styles and served to advertise for the material goods presented on stage. The advent of department stores and mail order catalogues facilitated the ability of Americans to fill their homes with a wide variety of art pieces and material goods that fueled a “Japan craze.”

But the influence did not only come from Japonism’s position in Europe, but rather because the empire of Japan actively staged spectacles at world’s fairs encouraging Americans to purchase Japanese goods. Japan’s empire was growing in terms of territory and influence throughout the turn of the twentieth century. Pushing

material goods into Western markets increased its economic strength and cultural position. The abundance of Japonism in the lives of Americans had as much to do with supply as it did demand. The empire of Japan financially benefited from the exchange while also exporting its cultural influence at a moment when it was competing with the United States for political and social influence throughout the Pacific. That said, in the United States, the introduction of Japanese art and style at times fused with earlier images and ideas about Asia introduced by trade with China. As Mari Yoshihara suggests, this led to the “conflation, confusion, and admixture of Chinese and Japanese traditions and styles along with other ‘Oriental’ ones.”¹² Gardens could occasionally be sites of those cultural processes.

In 1893, Joseph Conder published *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, the first text to introduce the aesthetics and concepts of Japanese gardening to an English-reading audience. After its publication, Americans increasingly demanded their gardens to be designed with Japanese aesthetics. Washington, D.C. was decorated with cherry trees, but so were many other gardens and parks throughout the country. People installed wooden bridges and rock gardens while planting bamboo, bonsai trees, Japanese maples, and chrysanthemums. And sometimes, the Japanese gardens included some vegetation or styles that mixed in influences from Chinoiserie. Moreover, they were physical locations where that conflation or admixture could be materialized. Styles were not just mixed, but so were physical objects and vegetation. Gardens provided a place where white Anglo American women could manifest or materialize the discourse of American Orientalism, shaping the conversation and

¹² Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 10.

perceptions of people from East Asia. The gardens allowed them to assemble the separate parts of Japonism (the kimono and chrysanthemum here, the woodprint and bonsai tree there) into a fully realized world. However, creating that would not have been possible without the labor of disenfranchised East Asian immigrants, particularly those from Japan.

The history of Japanese immigration to the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth century was shaped by access to land and agricultural circumstances. Initially, Japanese laborers were encouraged to immigrate to states like California by American businesses as a means of cutting the wages of Chinese laborers. Japanese immigrants came to compete for jobs in many of the same positions held by Chinese workers and they did not represent a significant percentage of those immigrating to the United States. However, after anti-Chinese sentiment resulted in the creation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese immigration increased steadily. Advances in agricultural technology and an increased demand for food in growing cities resulted in a greater need for laborers. Labor shortages were resulting in rotting food. Many of the Japanese immigrants had been rural farmers. More than fifty percent came to work for three or five years and then returned to Japan, but others eventually decided to stay. They arrived with aspirations and the skill sets to farm, finding a variety of avenues to control their own areas to farm. In the late nineteenth century, Japanese immigrants were able to contract, lease, share, or own land. While many men came alone, as they saved money, they eventually payed for their wives or picture brides to join them. They tended to live in huts with “oil lamps for light, boards nailed together with legs for tables, and straw-filled canvases

for beds.”¹³ While men worked in the fields, women tended to have double duty in the field and in the home. They raised the children, cooked, and cleaned in the house, while also going out to tend to the crops. Once the picture brides arrived, they did not have the patrician lifestyle imagined and romanticized in Japonism. As it became apparent that Japanese immigrants were not returning but rather establishing a presence, families, and businesses, ethnic antagonism that white workers had once directed towards Chinese immigrants transferred to Japanese immigrants.

California attempted to discourage Japanese settlement through a variety of tactics, but it would be targeting access to land that would prove the most influential. Initially, California politicians tried to repeat the efforts they found successful when addressing Chinese immigration. When the Chinese Exclusion Act was about to expire in 1902, they called for the act to be extended and to include restrictions on Japanese immigration. However, Japanese immigrants had something that immigrants from China and Southern and Eastern Europe did not have: the might and power of the Empire of Japan. When San Francisco attempted to segregate schools in 1906, attempting to place all Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students in an Oriental school, the government of Japan contacted Washington, D.C. and argued that such an action would be in violation of a treaty between the governments. The act contributed to Theodore Roosevelt’s need to broker the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, where the United States agreed to refrain from restricting Japanese immigration if the empire of Japan agreed to decrease the number of people it allowed to emigrate. Eventually,

¹³ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian American* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company: 1989), 190.

other provisions would pass. In 1921, the countries agreed on a “Ladies Agreement,” where Japan stipulated that it would not allow picture brides to emigrate. And in 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act did outlaw Japanese immigration to the United States. But by that point, the state of California had already modeled a way for states to greatly deter Japanese immigration. They targeted land use. In 1913, they passed a law that said those that were ineligible for citizenship could not own land. Japanese immigrants were considered ineligible because they were not considered white. Japanese farmers no longer had access to contracting, leasing, sharing, or owning land for agriculture because it was illegal for them to put their names on legal forms. Some worked around the system by either using the names of their children or by working with white land owners that would charge them more for the land and ignore the law. However, the California legislature passed an Alien Land Act in 1920 that addressed those loopholes. Between 1913 and 1925, eight other states passed similar laws. Because Japanese immigration was so deeply connected with agricultural labor, the laws were directly designed to target and deter immigration from Japan.

Ronald Takaki argues that fears of Japanese settlement rather than miscegenation fueled the ethnic antagonism. He suggests that the efforts to build strong bonds through ethnic enclaves and alternative ethnic economies—actions done in order to escape the pressures and discrimination Asian Americans faced—ended up compounding the antagonism and producing a sense that Asian Americans are always alienated and strangers in the United States. In the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants who had been excluded from the general economy ended up opening their own small businesses. They became shopkeepers and ethnic enterprisers who

primarily served other Chinese immigrants. However, their businesses often mirrored the services of businesses owned by European Americans. Takaki argues that Japanese immigrants attempted to avoid ethnic antagonism by creating niche businesses that served needs similar but not quite the same as those provided for by white business owners. Garden nurseries and garden maintenance businesses pioneered by Japanese immigrants were examples of that type of enterprise. However, by working within an economy and enclave separate from the main (white) economy, it made white workers and politicians suspicious, which increased their antagonism. That antagonism further drove Asian Americans into making stronger bonds within their respective enclaves. Within the enclaves, Japanese Americans had a cultural life, but as working-class laborers, it bore little resemblance to that imagined in the private residential gardens they cultivated for their white employers.

For those employers, private residential gardens in Southern California at the turn of the twentieth century were sites of escape, power, and pleasure. As immigration from Europe increased and the Great Migration brought African Americans to urban centers in the Northeast and Midwest, California was marketed as the greatest destination to fulfill a white flight fantasy. The promise of California as an untouched Eden, a garden paradise where all forms of vegetation grew without toil, permeated the national imagination of Anglo Americans seeking a haven from the social and racial transformations the new century brought.¹⁴ Gardens typified an era of cosmopolitan consumption, fueled by Eastern and Midwestern U.S. immigrants

¹⁴ Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Paradise Transplanted: Migration and the Making of California Gardens* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 26-70.

who possessed discretionary income and a desire to display global tastes. Creating a garden reshaped the existing landscape, erasing the history and peoples who had inhabited the land. But it also depended on labor performed by oppressed or disenfranchised individuals and communities. The sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo has argued such racialized labor has always played a role in the history of California gardens, including the indigenous slaves who worked for early Catholic missions, the Japanese immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century, and the Mexican American *jardiñeros* who replaced them.¹⁵ Yet throughout each era, a key feature of Southern California gardening has remained the elevated status of producing non-fruit bearing vegetation. In other words, rather than being a site of agricultural utility, gardens are at a social peak when their only purpose is aesthetic, spiritually rather than physically nourishing. In the face of the challenges and difficulties of modernity, U.S. gardens offered romanticized spaces that promised peace, serenity, and wholeness. They emphasized the non-utilitarian quality of gardens because it demonstrated socioeconomic power through luxury and celebrated aesthetics over function. Furthermore, gardens were designated sites of restoration, producing an imagined sense of racialized purity or innocence that whitewashed the landscape of California.

Private residential gardens in Southern California demonstrated an important shift in a larger history of gardens in the United States. While cities in the Northeast and Midwest designated space for municipal parks and gardens like Central Park in Manhattan or Lincoln Park in Chicago, the vast majority of cities in Southern

¹⁵ Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Paradise Transplanted*, 1-25.

California notably did not follow suit.¹⁶ The Anglo and European Americans who immigrated to the region brought many Progressive-era politics and city planning ideals with them. However, with greater discretionary incomes, expansive tracts of space sold for residency, and the sense that no crop could fail in the perennial growing season, municipal parks gave way to expansive estates (typified by the Huntington just south of Pasadena in San Moreno) and private residential gardens. This distinction is significant for considering how the sites functioned as performance venues for the Pasadena Drama League's shows. As an extension of the home, the gardens were more private than a general park or like the tennis courts where they organized the early community dances. However, by holding events and inviting members of the community in, the gardens became decidedly public venues. The liminality of the gardens was reflective of the liminal space women navigated in their gender roles at the turn of the twentieth century on the cusp of the nineteenth amendment's ratification.

Socially, gardens were gendered as feminine spaces, part of a woman's domain in the nineteenth century's cult of domesticity. Gardens, like children, represented an intersection between nature and civilization that women were assumed naturally disposed to rear. Just as visual and performing arts education became a means or indicator of refinement for Anglo American women at the turn of the century, gardening prowess and appreciation came to denote good breeding and class deportment. Gardens fit into a domestic economy managed by women that belonged to what Thorstein Veblen deemed "the leisure class." At the turn of the twentieth

¹⁶ Wade Graham, *American Eden*, 235-292.

century, private gardens were prominent gendered displays of conspicuous consumption. According to Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, fields like sociology have been reluctant to study gardens beyond Veblen's assessment because they are frequently disregarded as "irrelevant, frivolous, and feminine."¹⁷ Not unlike amateur performance in theatre history, the gendering of gardens has impacted its analysis—or lack thereof—in existing literature. Staging amateur performances in gardens was not merely a matter of convenience. Rather gardens were sites that were in harmony with the greater ramifications of women organizing, producing, and articulating their ideas through amateur theatre. By providing a reason for women to invite their community into a pocket of their home, amateur performances made the gardens a more public setting that displayed and disseminated women's ideas about the world around them.

In the earliest years of the Pasadena Drama League, while Eleanor Bissell, Dorothy Hinds, and other women invited the community to their residential gardens to see a variety of performances, programs repeatedly consisted of or included a pageantry of Orientalism. At the turn of the twentieth century, American Orientalism became a dominant ideology in the national psyche. Throughout the late nineteenth century, the United States established an "informal empire" in China and Japan through "the Open Door policy, unequal treaties, and the expansion of commerce and cultural imports."¹⁸ At the same time, the United States also asserted its Asia-Pacific empire in more formal ways through the colonization of Hawai'i, Guam, and the Philippines. The Empire of Japan, meanwhile, demonstrated its own cultural and

¹⁷ Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Paradise Transplanted*, 23.

¹⁸ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 7.

colonial strength, conquering territory and presenting its history around the world through the Japonism described. In light of these global and political dynamics, American Orientalism refers to the discourses Americans used to assign the various and often changing meanings to China and Japan during the early twentieth century.

Scholars have analyzed the gendered politics of how Western cultures imagined their encounters and relationship with East Asian peoples, noting the trend to feminize East Asian countries. This rhetoric and ideology proved helpful as the United States stretched its indirect imperialist muscles in the Pacific, as greater numbers of immigrants arrived from countries like Japan, and the Japanese empire grew prominent as the twentieth century progressed.¹⁹ But central to the pervasiveness and ubiquity of this ideology was the role of white women in using and shaping American Orientalism to navigate their own understandings of race and gender. In *Embracing the East*, Mari Yoshihara argues,

Their participation in Orientalist discourse offered many American women an effective avenue through which to become part of a dominant American ideology and to gain authority and agency which were denied to them in other realms of sociopolitical life. By embracing Asia, women gained material and affective power both in relation to American society and vis-a-vis Asian subjects, which brought new meanings to their identities as white American women.²⁰

Asian culture, like gardens or children, was yet another area that white women were presumably naturally disposed to understanding. They claimed an authoritative capacity to represent and translate the mysteries of East Asia to their own communities.

¹⁹ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8-10.

²⁰ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 6.

A key space in American Orientalism—whether it was expressed in visual art, poetry, novels, or stage performance—was the garden. American Orientalism was highly informed by Romanticism and most “Oriental” theatre productions were romantic melodramas. The garden was presumed or staged as a space of sensual pleasure and freedom removed from the modernized world. Popular American Orientalist plays like David Belasco’s *Madame Butterfly* (as well as British pieces like George Hazelton and Joseph Benrimo’s *The Yellow Jacket*) boasted scenic designs that prominently featured elaborate gardens. It took on dramaturgical dimensions. Orientalist gardens became sites of revelation and discovery for other key plot points. They were also intertwined with female characters. Female characters were often depicted waiting in gardens. The Orientalist discourses that exotified and emphasized the sexuality of the East Asian characters associated that heightened sexuality with the garden itself. And in American Orientalism, the garden and sexuality found in Asia are presented as natural: unfettered by constraints or cultural constructions of modernity.

No doubt the ubiquity of the representations of East Asian, particularly Japanese, gardens reflected the rampant interest in and desire for actual Chinese or Japanese gardens. They were marketed and made famous at the world’s fairs in cities like Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco. At the turn of the twentieth century, the empire of Japan made a concerted effort to promote representations of its prominence and cultural superiority, and the proliferation of its garden styles reflected that effort. As Japanese gardens became more popular and recognized as an erudite good to

possess, the imagined world of American Orientalism consumed by white women shifted into a reality that those women could produce to shape.

However, the gardens themselves were literally shaped by the male Japanese immigrants who were denied access to citizenship and land ownership in California. As immigration from Japan increased, in 1913 and then again in 1920, the California legislature passed the Alien Land Law, also known as the Webb-Haney Act. While the law impacted many immigrants from various regions in East and Southeast Asia, it was specifically designed to curtail Japanese immigration. The law made it impossible for the farm workers immigrating to the US to own agricultural land though it made provisions for short-term leasing. The Alien Land Law passed the same year construction ended on the Los Angeles Aqueduct. The capacity to pull and control industrial quantities of water as well as dictate land ownership requirements constructed a system that privileged European American farmers.²¹ But rather than abandoning their new homes because of the conditions, Japanese immigrants shifted from agricultural work to forming maintenance gardening businesses. They were pushed into working-class wage labor, but Japanese American laborers created the landscape that Southern California famously promoted.

Private residential gardens in Southern California were created in racialized and gendered terms. They served upper and middle-class white women in their social efforts to navigate and control the racial and gendered circumstances of their lives. The gardens came from dreams about an exotic pre-modern life detached from anything but consumer goods that represented a patrician Orientalism. But the

²¹ Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Paradise Transplanted*, 71-115.

gardens—beyond all other embraceable goods—gave those souvenirs, trinkets, and dreams a material reality. They provided a stage seeped in Orientalist imaginations and power dynamics even before they staged works like *Princess Kiku*. However, staging the comedies, idyls, and romantic melodramas made the gardens more public. The performances turned the gardens into vehicles that the women of the Drama League could use to explore their Orientalist dreams, stake their authority as cultural ambassadors and translators, and generate their understandings of racial and gender identities in the midst of a changing world that they themselves recently moved into to create. In the following sections, I analyze three of the Orientalist performances the Pasadena Drama League staged in the private residential gardens of their members between 1918 and 1922. The League hosted the first play *Princess Kiku* at the estate of Samuel and Dorothy Hinds, while *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* and *Told in a Chinese Garden* both took place at the home of the Center's president, Eleanor Bissell. Each performance let them celebrate an event within the League and in those celebrations their Orientalist plays expressed new dimensions of white femininity in Southern California.

Orientalist Internationalism is a Virtue: Tales from Instructive Gardens in Princess Kiku

The first American Orientalist play the Pasadena Drama League staged extolled the virtues of international cultural literacy. Its dramaturgy and its production history assert that the garden was the main site where British and Anglo American women could learn about the values and perspectives of Japanese women. The play

ridicules figures that refuse to study and learn about other cultures while embodying isolationism as the main antagonist. The titular Princess Kiku, a young woman raised by the Japanese emperor and who at the end of the play discovers she was actually born to British parents who died at sea when she was an infant, stands as the ultimate example of an assimilationist philosophy. She was immersed in a strange and exotic world since childhood and it shaped the way she saw the world. Her immersion, education, and assimilation took place in the Japanese garden represented throughout the play. As a comedy, the play hails the virtue of what Pierre de Coubertin referred to as “true internationalism,” a vision of the world community that was related to but quite different from cosmopolitanism. *Princess Kiku* was written to teach women, particularly young women, not only about Japanese culture but the value of an international cultural competency in general. The play assumes that the garden is the site of instruction for Japanese women and makes the garden the tool of instruction for Western women. In Pasadena in 1918, the play’s dynamics allowed women a chance to celebrate the work they had accomplished over the last year and respond to politics of the world around them.

Pierre de Coubertin is perhaps best known for being the founder of the modern Olympic Games. At the turn of the twentieth century, approximately five years before the publication of *Princess Kiku*, he outlined his philosophy for how various nations throughout the world could interact with one another and work towards world peace. Central to his philosophy was a deliberate distinction between cosmopolitanism and what he referred to as “true internationalism.” In his mind, the former “devalues the significance of nationality and discrete cultural traditions and

calls for a world citizenry in which all such differences are overcome and finally abandoned.”²² True internationalism, by contrast, “understands cultural differences as an enduring and marvelous feature of the human landscape and argues that world peace depends upon the celebration of human diversity and not the eradication of it.”²³ The modern Olympic Games reflect the distinction and these sentiments. Rather than envisioning a shared global identity or morality stemming from increased contact, celebrating difference is seen as the means for peace and maintaining national identities. The point of true internationalism is to recognize the cultural differences and to develop an “intelligent and enlightened sympathy.”²⁴ At a moment when the United States and the empire of Japan both increased their political and cultural influence throughout the Pacific, it was in the interest of citizens to understand the other national power. Though neither was planning on abandoning national identity for a shared global sensibility, culture could be exchanged. *Princess Kiku* reflects the sentiment of a project that exclaims the principles of true internationalism; however, the culture it presents was not produced by Japan but rather Orientalist images and discourses. It was ostensibly written to train young women to develop sympathy for Japanese culture by having them perform the cultural differences. But the text and performance actually instructed young women to see what I am calling Orientalist Internationalism as a virtue. The Orientalist Internationalism posited that the whiteness that gave Anglo American women access to citizenship also allowed them

²² John J. MacAloon, “Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies,” *Ritual, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, Edited by John J. MacAloon (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 252.

²³ John J. MacAloon, “Olympic Games,” 252.

²⁴ Pierre de Coubertin, “Does Cosmopolitanism Lead to International Friendliness?” *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 17 (1898): 429-34.

the authority to take on the culture and signifiers of what they imagined Japanese culture to be.

Compared to the other Orientalist works that the Center would stage in subsequent years, *Princess Kiku* was a slightly older play and not written by an American. A writer by the name of M.F. Hutchinson published the play in London in 1903. Hutchinson, presumably a woman, wrote a number of scripts at the turn of the twentieth century. Most were intended for amateur production and many for all female casts. *Princess Kiku*, itself, features nine roles for women. Most of the characters are women; the one exception is a young Japanese boy named Ito that the script calls for a young woman to play. Most of Hutchinson's plays were advertised as perfect for performance in schools or at home. Scripts for works like *The Australian Cousin*, *The Masque or Pageant of English Trees and Flowers*, and *Cranford* were advertised in *The Journal of Education*.²⁵ Her plays were designed to provide instruction for girls. In the United States, *Princess Kiku* was performed at multiple women's colleges, normal schools, and girls' academies. By the time the Pasadena Drama League staged *Princess Kiku* in 1918, it is entirely possible some of the women in the cast had previously participated in some earlier amateur production of the play.

Hutchinson's "Japanese Romance" fit into a pattern of education where white women, both the performers and the playwright, could claim a gendered authority of

²⁵ See "Plays for Sale," *The Journal of Education* 38, No 448 (November 1, 1906), 768. Other plays by M.F. Hutchinson include *The Christmas House Party* (a comedy in four acts), *The Cressman's Entertain*, *The Terror of a Day*, *The Man Next Door*, *An Unrehearsed Comedy or Love and the Dictionary*, and *The Masque of Peace and the New Year*. Hutchinson also published a novel entitled *Captain Ferrercourt's Widow*.

understanding Japanese culture. According to Mari Yoshihara, in the nineteenth century, Orientalism was an “esoteric body of knowledge held by a select group of male intellectuals.”²⁶ That changed with the rise of what John Tchen has called “commercial Orientalism.”²⁷ With the development of department stores, mail-order catalogues, and spectacles like world’s fairs, Orientalism became purchasable and popularized. In the United States, most of the marketing for commercial Orientalism targeted women. But access to these goods also provided white women with a means to control the popularization and development of American Orientalism, redistributing some of its meaning-making discursive power to women. Yoshihara argues that owning Orientalist art, performing Asian roles in professional theatre, and writing Orientalist poetry empowered white American women to become experts on the presumed feminized societies in East Asia. Women asserted their capacity for cultural authority in Orientalist matters in deliberately gendered terms, allowing them to “revise and reinforce the dominant discourse on American Orientalism.”²⁸ *Princess Kiku* is an instructive text that displays the mechanics of this process. It also indicates the gendered dynamics involved in the virtue of true internationalism that operated within American Orientalism.

The story of the play unfolds over the course of seven scenes. Princess Kiku, by all accounts a daughter of the Japanese emperor, spends the majority of the play consorting with her female attendants in her garden. She looks to them for advice and solace, recounting her contact with and growing affection for a young English lord

²⁶ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 10.

²⁷ John Kuo Wai Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, 63-166.

²⁸ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 11.

who is in Japan looking for a baby who was lost at sea. The play is a comedy of social manners, one which both revels in and mocks the traditions of an imagined pre-industrial Japan. The young women playfully banter about the odd mannerisms and customs of the English gentleman, including the European fashion of wearing black to party as well as the sight of a cummerbund and a coat with tails. Meanwhile, an older woman named Sakara sees a greater threat in the British presence. She bribes a young boy, Ito, to pretend that the touch of Princess Kiku brings blindness to him. When Princess Kiku is deceived, she secludes herself, fearful that she will bring suffering to others. While Sakara vexes Kiku, two English women appear peripherally throughout the play. They are each relatives of the lord and are visiting Japan with him. The younger Lady Cecil embraces the opportunity to learn about the new and strange land she finds herself in while the older Miss Pendergast obstinately and narrow-mindedly resists any invitation to engage with Japanese culture. Eventually, after Sakara's plot is revealed and thwarted, Lady Cecil recognizes a charm bag that Princess Kiku wears around her neck. Lady Cecil identifies Princess Kiku as the orphan the Lord seeks. The play ends with the discovery that Princess Kiku was really a British heiress the whole time and that there are no longer any barriers to her love for the English lord (and cousin) she has been admiring.

As the author, M.F. Hutchinson claimed authority as a cultural expert in her dramaturgical construction of *Princess Kiku*. She emphasized this authority in the additional information published with the script. In the text's introduction and foreword, Hutchinson asserts key anthropological observations regarding Japanese society. She not only discusses the significance of the "honorable" kimono worn by

Japanese women, but also comments on the customs and spiritual beliefs that structure the “obeisance and pleasure-centered lives” of young Asian women.²⁹ In addition to noting how Japanese life was shaped by the types of material goods that many British and Anglo American women began to purchase and put in their homes, Hutchinson provides a plethora of information on the notion of female courtesy and ceremoniousness. She observed, “The Japanese are notably and effusively polite in their deportment. Japanese girls are especially kind hearted and obliging. Their religion denies them immortality, and they believe that their paramount duty in life is to please.”³⁰ While the traits are certainly observable in Princess Kiku and her court (while noticeably lacking in Sakara), Hutchinson is clear to connect the gendered traits to sociological roots. Kiku is a stereotypical wilting lotus flower in the vein of Madame Butterfly, but Hutchinson is sure to communicate to readers that her play, though a comedy, is a studied representation of Japanese life.

For Hutchinson, the place to study that way of life is found in the study of Japanese gardens. The garden was where Japanese women were trained in a particular perspective of the world. So if British or Anglo American women wanted to understand Japanese women, they needed to start by examining the gardens. The foreword goes on to say,

Their [young Japanese women] education imbues them with an intense love of flowers, bright colors and all that is beautiful; it inculcates the extreme of social etiquette in every-day deportment; it adds words of compliment in the commonest phrases of conversation, and moreover, teaches them to rely on signs, omens and tutelary gods, both good and evil.³¹

²⁹ M.F. Hutchinson, *Princess Kiku: A Japanese Romance* (New York: Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, 1903), 6.

³⁰ M.F. Hutchinson, *Princess Kiku*, 6.

³¹ M.F. Hutchinson, *Princess Kiku*, 6.

Princess Kiku always has a chrysanthemum in hand and is always herself a living chrysanthemum. “Kiku” is, in fact, the Japanese word for chrysanthemum. Kiku has internalized the lessons of the garden so much that she is a fixture in it. The garden teaches about presentation (the pageantry of color), deportment (fragility and obeisance), etiquette (elevated speech worthy of the aesthetic beauty), and superstition (a heightened spirituality based on communications through the material world). Gardens are the schools to ways of life that the Western Modernist Orientalist reads as a Romantic haven for pre-modern simplicity and spirituality. *Princess Kiku* begins and ends in the garden. Kiku’s true identity is revealed in the garden. As the entire text of *Princess Kiku* is written for young women to understand a foreign and exotic culture in the world, Hutchinson highlights the garden as the primary schoolroom for that anthropological endeavor.

The garden is also presented as the training ground and natural home for the four Japanese women who are attendants for Princess Kiku. O Mimosa San, O Yuki San, O Totmai San, and O Haru San have about as much range and differentiation between them as the various fairies that serve Titania in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In fact, they have about the same dramaturgical function as Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed. They explain what happens off stage, particularly all of the actions between Princess Kiku and the British lord that is never seen in the play. And they spend their life on stage serving the princess. The second act even has them prepare Kiku to sleep in a way reminiscent to the fairies’ preparation for Titania’s slumber. In fact, when the four women prepare the princess for bed, the script calls for a parade of Moonbeam Faeries to appear and dance. The

Moonbeam Faeries were probably younger girls. They would have been a way to incorporate non-speaking parts, particularly if the play were done at a college or school. But one telling element in the script calls for the faeries' costumes to basically resemble those of the young women in kimonos in Kiku's court. There are slight alterations but they are supposed to resemble each other. This frames the Japanese women further as otherworldly and magical or mystical creatures that exist in a fantastical nature. This pageant no doubt served a practical purpose of creating roles for young women interested in participating. However, it also granted the opportunity for a greater exotification and romanticization of Japan. In that way, the garden becomes both the home of a mystical Other *and* the means by which such an exotic "people" can be understood.

When the play is read as educational or instructive on how to act as an anthropological expert, the character who models the traits for audience members to emulate is young Lady Cecil. She is neither the object of study like the young Japanese women nor the brash xenophobic comedic trope found in Miss Pendergast. Lady Cecil continually (but gently) rebukes her aunt for saying ignorant things or refusing to embrace the differences in Japanese culture. Lady Cecil takes a gleeful pleasure watching as the young women in Kiku's court repeatedly offend Pendergast as they explain how in their culture they honor and respect people as old and ancient as her. Playing the roles of Princess Kiku or any of the young maidens would require a young performer approaching the role to act like Lady Cecil herself. They should learn the customs and practices of this exotic and foreign culture because in an ideology of true internationalism ideology a utopic and global sense of community

can flow from understanding national particularities. The play mocks British customs and how bizarre or barbarian they would seem to the imagined Japanese onlooker. However, Princess Kiku never entirely abandons national identity for a cosmopolitan sensibility that rises above either British or Japanese identity. By the end of the play, the cultural distinctions between the United Kingdom and Japan remain intact. The play presumes and perpetuates a perspective that working towards true internationalism can take a lifetime of study and occurs through material goods and performance.

Contrasting Princess Kiku and Lady Cecil against the older women of the play permits Hutchinson to instill lessons about true internationalist virtues for white women. Miss Pendergast is comedic because of her obstinance. She refuses to learn distinctions and differences. That makes her vulnerable to ridicule and alienated from all of the other women in the play. Sakara is literally a threat in the play, not only to Princess Kiku immediately, but also to the entire endeavor of British and Japanese relations. Sakara, the old “hag” or “wise woman,” represents an older spirit of isolationism, one that prevented trade and contact. Sakara sees the British men mentioned by the young women as a threat to the empire she lives in and to her way of life. She sees Kiku as a problem not because Kiku is British—a detail beyond everyone’s perception, including Sakara’s—but because Kiku wishes to consort with the British. Hutchinson paints Pendergast’s ignorance and Sakara’s distrust as detrimental and dangerous to Western and Eastern societies. They do not just want to refrain from learning about the cultural differences of another nation, but they actively attempt to keep others from developing the intelligent or enlightened

sympathy as well. In other words, they stand in opposition to the peace possible through a philosophy of true internationalism. In this context, the quality of Lady Cecil's commitment to learn about and embrace Japanese culture is emphasized. *Princess Kiku* was a play script written to be performed. But more importantly, preparing for a performance of the play mirrored the values reflected in the themes of the text itself. To be in *Princess Kiku*, young Western white women would need to become authorities on Orientalist discourses and knowledge and articulate their understandings of Japanese culture through performance.

The Pasadena Drama League staged *Princess Kiku* twice in the summer of 1918. They first performed in the amateur stage setting available at the popular Pasadena Shakespeare Club on June 18. The show received great praise from the local *Pasadena Star-News*. As was often the case with shows put on by the Drama League or the Pasadena Community Players, much credit for the success went to the character work of Mrs. A.H. Palmer. Palmer became a seasoned amateur performer who was a cornerstone of community performance in Pasadena. In her role as Miss Pendergast, Palmer, the *Star-News* raved, "illustrated to perfection the insular, impervious, uncompromising British tourist, incessantly battered and incensed by unheard-of customs. She was skillfully extricated from awkward situations and her feelings soothed by her companion tourist as delightfully impersonated by Miss Samford."³² The reporter also indicated that the playing of the other parts was "of very even excellence." The evening concluded with a short reception following the performance where refreshments were served, though the paper indicated the cakes

³² "Shakespeare Club: 'Princess Kiku' Produced at Club," *Pasadena Star-News* June 19, 1918. 9.

and tea were American rather than Japanese-themed. From what the record indicates, the performance was organized by the Drama League to end the season of activity they had just completed.

However, it was one of the first times the League itself organized a performance rather than working with the Pasadena Community Players. Perhaps this was because the show was for an all-female cast. In the early days, the Pasadena Community Players Association rarely staged a show that did not offer Gilmor Brown a significant lead. While the leadership and membership of the Drama League and Community Players overlapped, the latter tended to be more evenly split between men and women than the former that was always predominantly composed of women. As a result, the preparation for the first performance of *Princess Kiku* represented the concerted effort of white women to use amateur performance as a means to navigate their understandings of Japanese culture. The *Star-News* article documenting the first performance notes that “The exceeding courtesy and ceremoniousness of the Japanese had been very successfully studied under Mrs. H. Takemaki.”³³ The Pasadena Drama League turned to a Japanese American woman for cultural understanding and authenticity to inform their presentation of the Orientalist pageantry of flowers and geisha dancing. This action to seek an authentic voice to legitimize the representation presented further indicates that a significant element of organizing the performance was to cultivate cultural competency and understanding. At the same time, it also perpetuated the power dynamics that were at play when white women paid Japanese immigrants to work on their Japanese residential gardens.

³³ "Shakespeare Club: 'Princess Kiku' Produced at Club," *Pasadena Star-News*, June 19, 1918, 9.

It was in such a garden that the Pasadena Drama League's second performance of *Princess Kiku* took place.

On June 21, 1918, Samuel and Dorothy Hinds hosted a performance of *Princess Kiku* for Pasadena in their Japanese garden. The event was organized to entertain key figures in Pasadena as well as recognize and celebrate various individuals who had assisted the Drama League and the Pasadena Community Players with productions throughout the previous year. The guests of honor included the City Commissioners, the Board of the Directors of the Children's Theater, Community and Associate players, and the main committees of the Community Playhouse. Tickets were sold at the Savoy Theatre, but members of the Drama League could use their membership cards for admittance. The estate and garden of Samuel and Dorothy Hinds offered a pristine and impressive venue for the event. The Hinds built their 8 bedroom, 7500 square foot home at 880 La Loma Road in 1916 not long after marrying. Their property, separated from the city center of Pasadena by the Arroyo Seco ravine, was about two acres. So in addition to their stately house, their estate included a large green backyard. They had plenty of room for sumptuous landscaping and to host several visitors in their garden for an amateur theatrical performance.

Samuel and Dorothy Hinds were active members of the League and the Pasadena Community Players, appearing quite frequently in productions at the Savoy Theatre and the Playhouse when it was built. In October 1918, just a few months after hosting members of the community in their garden, both Mr. and Mrs. Hinds appeared with Mrs. A. H. Palmer at the Savoy Theatre in the Pasadena Community Players' production of *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*. Samuel Hinds was a lawyer

until the Great Depression. In the 1930s, he and his wife lost their estate on La Loma road and divorced, but Samuel Hinds parlayed his work at the Playhouse into film and television opportunities. He is perhaps best remembered for his role as Jimmy Stewart's father in the film *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The S.S. Hinds estate, as it has become to be called, has a long history of staging fantasies prefaced on material wealth. While the estate has remained a private residence, it has been used occasionally for filming purposes in television and film. The house, both its interior and exterior, as well as the expansive lawn were featured in the 1985 *Alice in Wonderland* television movie, the 1988 feature film *Beaches*, a 2009 episode of the television series *Mad Men*, and a 2010 episode of the comedy series *Parks and Recreation*. In each iteration, the space was used to connote great wealth. After Hinds divorced his wife and struggled financially through the Great Depression, he made money by renting rooms of his home to boarders. The S.S. Hinds estate has been staging the fantasy and the pageantry of American opulence almost since it was built in 1916. And it is worth emphasizing that the residential garden and extensive yard is as significant to that role as the house itself. For a time, that opulence included the means to cultivate a Japanese garden as a sign of wealth and American imperialism, but also as a means of inducing cultural competency and materializing Orientalist Internationalism as a virtue for all to see.

There is no indication that the Japanese garden still exists or for how long the Hinds kept it as part of their landscape. In a 1937 photo album dedicated to the S.S. Hinds estate held in the archives of the Pasadena Museum of History, there was no evidence that the elements of the grotto mentioned in that *Star-News* article in any

way remained. But in 1918, the garden heightened the supposed authenticity of the presentation. The *Pasadena Star-News* indicated the Hinds' residential garden provided the perfect venue for *Princess Kiku*, recounting, "The Japanese grotto with its miniature bridges, waterfalls, and luxuriant foliage will give an Oriental background for the comedy."³⁴ When the Drama League staged the play at the Shakespeare Club, they had to produce a facsimile of a Japanese garden for scenes 1, 2, and 7. It is possible that they brought Japanese flowers from their own gardens, as they would have brought their kimonos, fans, and other Orientalist goods as props. The same accumulation of material goods would have been necessary for the second performance, but the garden collapsed the artificiality of the experience as a "facsimile." The garden had the bridges, waterfall, and foliage—it was no longer mere imagination but rather the very place it purported to be. Unlike professional theatre, an amateur performance situated in a garden was able to produce an "authentic" or hyperreal presentation of Japan. And the amateur performance of *Princess Kiku* firmly established that such a space—both the garden and the East Asian empire—was femininely gendered.

By establishing both the nation and the garden in gendered terms, the white women of the Pasadena Drama League created a claim for their expertise to know and decipher the cultural Other. Like Lady Cecil, they not only thought it was important to understand the dynamics of "Oriental" cultures, they knew how to go about learning. In *Princess Kiku* and subsequent performances, the women of the Drama

³⁴ "Garden Party at Hinds Home on La Loma Road:Drama League Entertain Those Who Assisted in Productions," *Pasadena Star-News*, June 19, 1918, 9.

League worked through their ideas of what that imagined Orientalist culture was on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. However, their performances reflected a response to the actual presence of East Asian immigrants in Southern California. And their plays in gardens worked towards establishing whiteness as more than a prerequisite for citizenship in the United States. Whiteness was staged as the means to accessing the benefits of an Orientalist Internationalism: they could take on the signifiers and elements of Japanese culture, but that exchange was a one way street. That privilege allowed them to center themselves in the discourse of American Orientalism while ignoring the labor of Japanese immigrants that made their illusions possible.

The Fragility of Racial Innocence: Beyond the Black/White Binary in The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes

A year after the production of *Princess Kiku*, the Pasadena Drama League gathered in another residential garden to stage and enjoy a different Orientalist play. On August 2, 1919, Eleanor Bissell, the second president of the Pasadena Center and one of its most active members and champions, hosted an evening of one-act plays to celebrate the presence of a distinguished guest visiting the city. The play that received first billing that evening was Benjamin Allen Purrington's Japanese Idyl *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes*. The dramaturgy of this one-act evokes a somber tone with much greater import than the comedy presented in *Princess Kiku*. It reflects the seriousness conveyed by David Belasco's *Madame Butterfly*. And central to that tone is an anxiety and fear surrounding a potential loss of innocence. Analyzing the dramaturgy of *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* and the production history of its 1919 staging in

Eleanor Bissell's garden indicates how the innocence embedded in the American Orientalism constructed by white women was both gendered and racialized. By staging innocence as a defining characteristic of East Asian Orientalism, threatening its fragility, and reestablishing its permanence as a return to a natural order by each play's resolution, women in the Pasadena Drama League were able to respond to a perceived threat created by the increased presence of Japanese immigrants. The naturalizing power and order of the garden allowed the women to see East Asian men and women as perpetual children preserved in adolescent amber. Taking on those identities allowed them justify their authority over the Japanese men and women they encountered in their daily lives. The white women of the Pasadena Drama League could assert their own cultural authority as modern women while also escaping into a fantasy world where pressures of modernity were absent from daily living.

In her book *Racial Innocence*, Robin Bernstein explains the historical and cultural creation of innocence as a characteristic of childhood in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She argues that with the industrial revolution, urbanization, and social forces of modernity, children were increasingly imbued with a sense of undisturbed purity. Children were creatures of nature that had been untainted by the corrupting influences of civilization. While there was a logic and acknowledgement that eventually children mature and become adults by losing that innocence, it became a social imperative to preserve innocence for as long as possible. Along with other reasons, she notes that this is why child labor laws emerged with force and fervor at the turn of the century. But significant to her argument is the fact that this innocence was specifically racialized. Innocence was a

characteristic reserved for white children. Bernstein asserts that in US material culture and social thought, African American children were denied access to innocence.³⁵ It was a quality they could never lose because they never had it in the first place. While the rhetoric of innocence enabled the formation of child labor laws that protected white children, the perceived lack of innocence justified physical violence against and exploitation of black bodies in a post-Reconstruction era.

While brilliant, Bernstein's construction of racialized innocence operates along a black/white binary. Certainly, European Americans who migrated to California transferred and replicated that black/white binary into the society and institutions they created. And their relocation was informed by a white flight seeking to escape the increased numbers of African Americans in urban centers in the Northeast and Midwest. But Bernstein's model of racialized innocence does not account for how that paradigm would be challenged and reconstituted in a space like California. The black/white binary of racialization held power in the formation of Asian American racial identities and the limitation of whiteness to Americans of European descent. Supreme Court cases like *Takao Ozawa v. United States* (1922) and *United States v. Baghat Singh Thind* (1923) are clear examples of this process playing out in legal realms. But innocence operated as a racialized and gendered ideology that impacted Asian Americans and the historical development of whiteness in a way distinct from the process Bernstein investigates. Whereas innocence was a trait denied to African Americans and a state out of which European Americans

³⁵ Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 1-29.

matured, it became a primary and perpetual characteristic of East Asian people in American Orientalism. The state of innocence is continually threatened, but its restoration and preservation is maintained as a natural order. In American Orientalism, racial innocence is an attribute of East Asian people no matter what their age might be. White women in the US perpetuated this fantasy in order to establish their own commitment to early twentieth-century gender roles as women's suffrage became constitutional and paradigms of the New Woman challenged social conventions surrounding gender and sexuality.

Benjamin Allen Purrington wrote *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* in 1916, a few years before the Pasadena Drama League decided to stage it. Purrington lived in San Francisco and published a couple of creative works in his life including plays and musical compositions. A little theatre called The Players Club of San Francisco produced the Japanese Idyl in January 1917. They later published the script in the first issue of their magazine *The Little Theatre Monthly*. The May 1917 issue featured a number of essays about theatre (including a report on productions of Strindberg in Tokyo by a Japanese American author), but Purrington's work was the only script that was included. *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* is quite short, taking up three pages. It consists of two female characters and one male character on stage: Kanoko (the titular Lady Lotus Eyes), a female neighbor Abutsa, and Kanoko's husband Hinabe. It also requires a flute player and a second male voice (representing the voice of Abutsa's husband) to be heard from offstage. The play opens in a Japanese garden, which remains the only location for the action of the play.

The garden represents Kanoko's world and it is threatened throughout the play by mystical external forces. The story resembles the types of ghost stories and legends that were published by Lafcadio Hearn in his popular 1904 collection, *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*. The play begins with the sound of a flute. The music emerges from no discernible origin, though Kanoko and Abutsa attribute it to the moon. When Kanoko and Abutsa appear, it is the first thing they discuss. Throughout the show, the flute continues playing and its song affects their families. From their discussion, the audience learns there is a history of men hearing the moon's song and abandoning their families. Kanoko is afraid of this happening while also resolutely certain of the love between her husband and herself. She confides with her friend that she has dark dreams or visions at night where a manifestation of Fear places his fingers on her heart. She, like Kiku, has dark dreams. Abutsa first tries to mollify the concerns of her friend by diminishing the importance of visions.

Abutsa: These are but omens, child.

Kanoko: But omens are the eyes through which we see / The future gleam³⁶

Kanoko discusses needing the love that her husband provides in order to survive. Abutsa says her perspective is based on youth and that as she grows older she will learn to appreciate the financial and material conditions a husband provides. This attitude shocks Kanoko and she dismisses the notion immediately.

Later, after Abutsa has left and Hinabe has arrived, Kanoko seeks reassurance from her husband, that he loves her and that he will never leave. He

³⁶ Benjamin Allen Purrington, "The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes." *The Little Theatre Monthly* 1, no. 1 (May 1917), 14.

readily supplies it until he begins to hear the flute music and feels its pull. Kanoto grabs her husband and begs him to stay. While the action occurs offstage, the audience also hears Abutsa lose her husband to the moon's song. She fights to keep him home just as Kanoko fights to keep her husband Hinabe, but Abutsa fails and she wails. As much as he loves her, the only thing that keeps Hinabe from abandoning Kanoko, is the competing song she provides: a lullaby for their unborn child. As Kanoto sings, Hinabe cannot hear the flute music anymore. What preserves their relationship is a child—or the promise of one—and the song the Lady Lotus Eyes prepares for that child. Hinabe is convinced their child will be a boy, but Kanoko reminds him that it could be a girl. Hinabe says the child cannot be a woman, but if the girl is like Kanoko, the Lady Lotus Eyes, he would be content. The play ends with their embrace and unity in the garden.

The plays produced by the Pasadena Drama League and Orientalist dramas in general tend to feature an external danger that threatens to destroy the innocence not simply of individual characters, but of the world itself. The fragility and mortality looming in *Princess Kiku* is quite startling. Most of the Japanese girls in Kiku's court express concern over the signs of trouble that occur, but Kiku is overwhelmingly convinced that she is about to die because she has consorted with the bizarre British barbarians. Sakara anticipates great danger to her way of life and her nation because of the presence of the British. In *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes*, the external force is more ambiguous but it still threatens to disrupt the world as it exists in the garden. The moon is the spirit of discontent and its song seems to be a metaphor for adventure, the unknown, and something more satiating than companionate love. In

both plays there is a substantial threat to what feels like a very fragile world. As in *Madame Butterfly*, the women lack much of an agency beyond having the capacity to collapse and weep. But in this way they are like the flowers they are named after. They are fragile and delicate and beautiful. Scholars have critiqued the Orientalist fantasy of the Butterfly stereotype in the character of Cio-Cio-San, but all of the qualities ascribed to that trope also characterized the world that all of the characters, male and female, inhabited. The space itself—that is to say the garden—was a fragile, beautiful, and feminized space constantly in danger, under the threat of lost purity.

However, part of the fantasy was that the purity and innocence was never actually lost. In each of these plays, the women and the world they inhabit are returned to a natural order that perpetuates their isolation from the external threats. This triumph of purity comes through a reification of gender roles. It is telling that Abutsa—a woman who has openly expressed her desire for a husband in material rather than emotional terms—is punished. And her punishment comes in the form of the loss of her husband. He abandons her. Kanoto, on the other hand, prevents her husband from forsaking her when she fully assumes the role and song of motherhood. The innocence of the idyl remains intact at the end. Rather than marching into the unknown, Hinabe will stay in the garden with wife and child. *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* boils down to a fairy tale about the preservation of family structures and traditional gender roles.

This preservation counters claims scholar Mari Yoshihara has made about the subversive dimensions of white women performing Asian femininity. According to her, when white women dressed and acted like Asian women in theatre it allowed

them to become New Women of the twentieth century, challenging Victorian gender roles and the ideology of separate spheres.³⁷ Yoshihara contends, “The performance of Asian femininity provided an effective tool for white women’s empowerment and pleasure as New Women.”³⁸ While I certainly agree with large parts of Yoshihara’s argument, particularly in terms of how performing Asian femininity allowed white women to challenge the ideology of separate spheres, part of her argument assumes the performance of identities all occurred in professional theatre. Her case studies focus on professional actresses. Amateur performances in gardens in the homes of women who cultivated domestic spaces articulated the empowerment and pleasure of white womanhood in a different pitch. Asian femininity was not a means of sexual liberation and experimentation, but rather a conservative retrenchment in existing gender norms.

Unlike *Princess Kiku*, *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* was produced in a slightly more modest garden at the home of Eleanor Bissell. Bissell was born in Hartford, Connecticut around 1870. She grew up the daughter of a prosperous banker and landowner. She graduated from Smith College and remained in Hartford until 1908. She eventually settled in Pasadena and became a very active member of the community. Compared to the S.S. Hinds estate, Bissell’s home at 572 Prospect Boulevard was comparatively homely and from what I could tell it did not have a Japanese garden or a waterfall. However, it did boast extensive space in both the front

³⁷ According to Yoshihara, New Women constituted the generation of women at the turn of the century who campaigned for women’s suffrage, demanded birth control, engaged in socialism, expressed themselves in arts and letters, sought “free love,” cut their hairs and smoked cigarettes.

³⁸ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 78.

and back yards. And as the President of the Pasadena Drama League, Eleanor Bissell hosted far more garden plays at her residence than anyone else. She provided the space for the League, for a reunion of Smith College alumnae, and drama arms of other community organizations. George Pierce Baker, the teacher famous for leading the first playwriting workshops at Harvard, gave a lecture in Bissell's garden. The garden became a very important venue for the activities of the Pasadena Drama League in its early years of operation. The Hinds had a Japanese garden, but Bissell had a garden theatre.³⁹

On August 02, 1919, Eleanor Bissell hosted an event to recognize and honor the presence of Dr. Richard Burton of the University of Minnesota. At that time, Dr. Burton had recently concluded his tenure as president of that national Drama League of America. He was in town, giving lecture in Pasadena, Los Angeles, and other Southern California locations. The collection of one-act plays in Bissell's garden theatre offered an opportunity to showcase the talent of the Pasadena Center and to offer community entertainment to a national champion of civic theatre. *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* opened the festivities. Two other one-act shows followed it: *Addio* by Stark Young and *The Workhouse Wards* by Lady Gregory. Young was a famous Mississippi playwright who wrote stories depicting the American South. *Addio* takes place in a cafe in New Orleans and features immigrants from Germany and Italy. Works by Lady Gregory, an internationally celebrated dramatist and founder of Dublin's Abbey Theatre, were frequently produced by little theatre

³⁹ After the Drama League's production of *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes*, the Pasadena Community Playhouse Association organized a night of one acts at the Shakespeare Club where they performed the same play. According to Karen J. Blair, it was preceded by a Chinese dance performed by a young woman from Santa Barbara named Martha Graham. See Karen J. Blair, *The Torchbearers*, 168.

companies in the United States. Most of her works strived to depict the life of peasants or common people in Ireland. *The Workhouse Wards* was a comedy about Irish men living in a poor house.

In addition to offering a lot of opportunities to hear amateur stage accents, the selection of plays indicated the impact of folk drama. The program reflected the cultures of Japan, the American South, Germany, Italy, and Ireland. The difference with *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes* (in addition to not being written by a person that comes from the area represented in the performance) is that it does not reflect a folk experience. As mentioned earlier, American Orientalism tended to circulate images of a fairly patrician Orientalism. There is no sense Hinabe and Kanoto work to cultivate their garden. Nor are Kanoto or Abutsa ever depicted performing domestic labor. An element of most folk depictions is the experience of common people, generally because their struggle and endurance is romanticized. But in American Orientalism, the space automatically romanticizes the characters. They do not perform labor nor do they struggle. Their lives are pure and innocent, free from the demoralizing conditions of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. In American Orientalism, East Asian men and women live in a utopia designed for children. By contrasting them against the folk of European descent, the women of the Pasadena Drama League staged East Asian people as pristine children of Eden, innocent to the toils of the world and perfectly conformed to ascribed gender roles.

Imaging and performing East Asian people as innocent allowed women in the Pasadena Drama League to address the anxiety caused by the presence of East Asian immigrants. If existing as perpetual children, they posed no threat. Furthermore, it

positioned them in a way so white women felt best suited to oversee their employment. White men worked for the legislation of the Alien Land Act of 1913 that pushed Japanese immigration out from the opportunity for citizenship or land ownership and into the working class and wage labor. But white women who hired Japanese immigrants as wage laborers that worked on their gardens needed a means to assuage the threat of men in their domestic spaces. Amateur performances of American Orientalism represented East Asian men and women as perpetual children devoid of sexuality. White womanhood was best situated to manage the labor and presence of East Asian immigrants. This allowed white women to oversee and supervise the work of East Asian men in Southern California, establishing a clear power dynamic and hierarchy in society. As seen in *The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes*, American Orientalism was racialized, gendered, and operated on the idea of perpetual innocence that needed to be preserved, protected, and monitored. Where black children had no access to innocence and white children could lose it, it was imagined that Asian women were eternal repositories or sources of it.

An Ancient Wisdom: Contrasting Modernity through Speech in Told in a Chinese Garden

The second Orientalist play staged in Eleanor Bissell's garden focused on representations of Chinese rather than Japanese culture. Truth be told, among Anglo Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, there often was very little distinction made between Chinese and Japanese cultures. Within the discourses and imagery of American Orientalism, both identities basically collapsed into each other. But as

social tensions rose in California towards Japanese immigration, American Orientalism in Southern California took a turn and began representing Chinese culture more than Japanese culture. The rise of Japan's influence in the Pacific and the deteriorating relationship between the governments of Japan and the United States probably fueled Anglo Americans' desire to emphasize Chinese styles. The famous Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood opened in 1927, just two years after the Playhouse in Pasadena. While land laws pushed Japanese immigrants out of sight and into wage labor, representations of imaginary Chinese locales pushed the image of Japanese bodies out of theatrical spaces as well. By the time Eleanor Bissell featured *Told in a Chinese Garden* in her garden in June 1921, there was an increased desire to push any representation of Orientalism into an ancient past so at odds with modernity that it presumed the extinction of the bodies it represented. Unlike *Princess Kiku* which takes place at the turn of the twentieth century, *Told in a Chinese Garden* occurs in a distant time. The production in Bissell's garden allowed white women to claim ownership and authority over a culture by pronouncing it dead and their responsibility to be caretakers of the past traditions.

Constance Wilcox, an American heiress from New York, wrote *Told in a Chinese Garden* in 1920. Wilcox published the script independently as well as in a collection with other scripts intended for outdoor production.⁴⁰ Notes inside the collection indicate for each play how directors and set designers could adapt the

⁴⁰ Constance Wilcox eventually married Prince Guido Pignatelli in 1925, with whom she had a daughter. She published a play called *Egypt's Eye* under the name "Princess Pignatelli." Later, Wilcox became embroiled in social scandal in 1937 then her husband absconded to Nevada to divorce Wilcox and marry another woman in Reno within a day of his declared divorce.

works if they staged them inside.⁴¹ Wilcox also outlined instructions for stage directions that would facilitate outdoor productions. These notes no doubt helped Gilmore Brown and Eleanor Bissell in their production of the play. Newspapers indicated that while Brown directed the show itself, Bissell wrote and prepared transition scenes as set pieces were moved. One article noted, “Excellent use was made of the possibilities of the garden location: exits and entrances were made from various leafy paths and much of the action took place on the grassy slope in front of the pergola.”⁴² Wilcox provided a text that represented the popularity of amateur performances, garden plays, and Orientalist gardens. And the Pasadena Drama League took full advantage of the narrative and images it provided.

Told in a Chinese Garden, more than any of the other plays mentioned in this chapter, follows the genre outlines of a romantic melodrama. The story features a young woman (Li-Ti) in peril, fated to marry a man she does not love. The man her father (Wang-Chu-Mo) wants her to wed is older, and he (Poa-Ting-Fang) is only interested in the dowry the daughter would provide. There is a gardener employed by Wang-Chu-Mo named Tai-Lo. Tai-Lo not only turns out to be a prince but also the nephew of Poa-Ting-Fang. When Tai-Lo’s father died, he decided he would rather take on a vagabond life than inherit the money and tethers of his father’s vast estate. When he left, Poa-Ting-Fang took over everything. Tai-Lo reveals the truth to everyone but Poa-Ting-Fang, refusing to relinquish his new wealth, denies Tai-Lo’s

⁴¹ Constance Wilcox, *Told in a Chinese Garden and Four Other Fantastic Plays for Out-doors or Indoors* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920).

⁴² “Garden Setting Attractive for Plays,” *Pasadena Star-News*, June 23, 1921 (retrieved from Eleanor Bissell’s scrapbook kept at the Pasadena Museum of History so the page number was not included).

claims. Wang-Chu-Mo holds a court to determine the veracity of both men's stories. The father learns the truth, consents for his daughter to marry the real prince, and the deceitful villain is stripped of his ill-gained riches.

The most striking element that sets *Told in a Chinese Garden* apart from the other productions is in its lack of roles for women. The play has 12 to 15 roles, seven of which have a sizeable portion of the lines. Of those seven roles, only three are roles for women. And none of the supporting characters are women. The three roles include the daughter Li-Ti and two older women that are governesses for Li-Ti. The governesses (Ling-Tai-Tai and Lang-Tai-Tai) are basically interchangeable and mostly exist to encourage Li-Ti to embrace Poa-Ting-Fang and not believe what they consider the delusional rants of Tai-Lo. Newspapers indicate that in Pasadena's production, all of the male roles were played by men. And the reviews of the performance barely mentioned the performances at all. The leads and the main supporting cast received praise, but much more attention was paid to the production elements. The *Pasadena Star-News* indicated, "the Oriental illusion was obtained by gorgeous costume, dragon embroidered hangings, misty lanterns and the flowery language of romance."⁴³ Where women did show up was in the transition from *Told in a Chinese Garden* to the comedy that followed it. The *Star-News* indicated,

A fracture of the evening which delighted an audience accustomed to groan through lengthy waits of amateur theatricals came when four little maids in Chinese costume tripped out and quickly dismantled the stage of its Oriental trappings, explaining each bit of action in quaint jingles composed by Miss Bissell [...] Dainty Gretchen Kayser also recited a little rhyme by Marjorie Sinclair, intended to aid the spectator in the mental transition from the Orient to the Occident.⁴⁴

⁴³ "Garden Setting Attractive for Plays," *Pasadena Star-News*, June 23, 1921.

⁴⁴ "Garden Setting Attractive for Plays," *Pasadena Star-News*, June 23, 1921.

Although Wilcox's play featured fewer women, the garden setting and the dainty maids framing the entire performance still rendered the characters presented in feminine terms. Like the flowers they acted next to, the representative bodies seen in *Told in a Chinese Garden* were reduced to an aesthetic value. Both the male and female characters existed as window dressing for the world they inhabited rather than acting with any degree of agency.

Wilcox's flowery language connects the nature of the garden's surroundings with Orientalist poetry she attempts to emulate. In the first act, after telling her to embrace the advances of Pao-Ting-Fang rather than refusing them, Ling and Lang call for Li-Ti to continue her lessons. They tell her to recite "the complete ancestry of the marigold," so she will have something prepared to share with Pao-Ting-Fang. The script calls for Li-Ti to give her lines in a sing-song voice, but she continually falters through the recitation. The older women correct her, but she wonders aloud if her future husband will be angry if she cannot remember the words. Her guardians grow frustrated with her and leave her to study. As they are gone, Li-Ti grabs a lute and sings a song:

O willow flowers like flakes of snow,
Where do your wandering legions go?
Little we care and less we know!
Our ways are the ways of the wind –
Our life in the whirl, and death in the drifts below"⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Constance Wilcox, *Told in a Chinese Garden*, 13.

This more authentic recitation not only comes naturally but is immediately followed by the arrival of the gardener Tai-Lo who sings his own song as he goes about his work. Unaware that Li-Ti listens in, he proclaims,

Prone beside the Western stream,
In the liliated dusk I dream.
And mocking me the wind of spring
Such medley of perfume doth bring,
I cannot tell what fragrance blows,
Nor guess the lotus from the rose.⁴⁶

The two characters meet each other, discovering their attraction and undying love for one another. But it is significant that the audience meets their characters through their poetry and songs about nature. Li-Ti literally comes to know her love interest through his proclamations about streams and the perfumes of spring. As an affluent white woman, Wilcox probably read translations of East Asian poetry and went to plenty of productions of *The Mikado* and *Madame Butterfly*. It was probable she was emulating both influences while writing her own poetry and indicating it as a key feature of the romantic leads in her play.

As the play goes on, the poetry about nature and the garden gives eventually every character speaking some pithy statements to pronounce. The short and clever phrases reflect Wilcox's awareness of the importance of Confucius. The play contains at least 32 direct quotations from Confucius. The play begins with Poa-Ting-Fang's humorous impatience with Li-Ti's father's desire to continually quote the Sage rather than talk about financial arrangements. At various moments throughout the play, each of the major characters quotes Confucius. This is particularly true towards the end of

⁴⁶ Constance Wilcox, *Told in a Chinese Garden*, 14.

the play when Li-Ti's father Wang holds court when Tai-Lo has decided to claim his birthright and Poa-Ting-Fang refuses to recognize Tai-Lo's claims. Wang indicates that before the trial, he will go consult the law books to prepare. He directly follows his intentions by quoting Confucius: "'To foster right among the people—to honor the ghosts of the dead while keeping aloof from them may be called wisdom.'"⁴⁷ Then, Poa-Ting-Fang and Tai-Lo join Wang in quoting Confucius throughout the trial to add authority to their arguments. However, each of the characters also has a tendency to speak in quick, clever metaphors that reflect the pithy Confucian constructions. Again, Wilcox's writing style probably owed a lot to the popularity of East Asian poetry and the speech patterns of East Asian characters presented in professional theatrical productions. But to a twenty-first century reader, all the characters sound like they are walking fortune cookies. Wilcox imbues her characters with "wisdom" purposefully. The statements are designed to reflect deep understandings of the world gained by experience and studied observations of the world. But it also has the impact of presenting the patrician society as ancient and untouched by modernity. The speech patterns and heightened rhetoric does a lot to detach Wilcox's representations of Orientalism from immediate agency and places them in a distant past.

By removing the culture from a contemporary temporality, Anglo American women were able defuse anxiety they might have had regarding the increasing political strength of Japan. Playing in the gardens gave them a hope about the future of racial and international tensions. It also allowed them to position East Asian

⁴⁷ Constance Wilcox, *Told in a Chinese Garden*, 35.

culture as something ancient that needed to be preserved. There is a tradition of European Americans representing societies as dead or extinct in order to claim power over them. In *Playing Indian*, Philip Deloria tracks a pattern of European Americans representing Native American societies as either extinct or dead even while said Native Americans continued to exist. This narrative repeatedly allowed European Americans to claim responsibility for inheriting land and a sense of responsibility for preserving Native American culture.⁴⁸ Wilcox's text makes a very similar move, allowing men and women in the Pasadena Drama League to appropriate an imagined Orientalist past and socially resituate the living bodies of Japanese and Chinese Americans living outside the garden grounds.

The effort to stage American Orientalism as ancient was amplified by pairing it with a new "modern" play. *Told in a Chinese Garden* appeared in a double billing and acted as an introduction for the real event of the day: the premiere of a new play by Alice Riley called *Their Anniversary*. Riley was a significant figure not only in the Pasadena Drama League, but the national Drama League as well. It was Riley's original drama reading circle in Chicago that became the first chapter of the Drama League that started the national endeavor. Riley also wrote a number of plays for children and for amateur production by adults. By the early 1920s, Riley had spent increasingly more time visiting Pasadena at different times of the year, and she developed a good friendship with Eleanor Bissell. In June 1921, Riley finished a new

⁴⁸ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 67.

romantic comedy and Bissell helped give the show its premiere production.⁴⁹ Riley's comedy occurs in the garden of a middle-class family that owns a home in a "nice suburb of a big city." As the play opens, the main female lead is seen arranging flowers.

The *Pasadena Star-News* repeatedly observed that the pairing of *Told in a Chinese Garden* with *Their Anniversary* provided such a nice contrast because of the different cultures and time periods. In announcing and advertising the event, one article indicated, "'Told in a Chinese Garden,' is the one-act play which will open the program, the Oriental theme and costumes making it a delightful contrast to the modern comedy which will follow it."⁵⁰ The costumes, the flowery language, and the very representation of East Asian characters placed the play in a pre-modern past. This move allowed the women of the Drama League and the audience to socially resituate the cultural influence of East Asian immigrants in their collective consciousness. East Asian culture was contained to the past. Exclusionary laws prevented Chinese immigration. And the 1921's Ladies' Agreement restricted the arrival of picture brides arriving from Japan. East Asian families would not be settling in the area and their culture could be controlled by white women as experts and responsible caretakers. The ancient Chinese past, lost to a modernizing East Asia which felt threatening, could be maintained, cultivated, and preserved like the flowers in the garden.

⁴⁹ The play was later published in the Drama Magazine, the main publication of the national Drama League of America. See Alice C.D. Riley, "*Their Anniversary*," *Drama Magazine* 12, no. 5 (February 1922), 157-162.

⁵⁰ "To Give Plays in Garden Setting: 'The Anniversary' to Be Played with Oriental Love Fantasy," *Pasadena Star-News*, June 1921 (retrieved from Eleanor Bissell's scrapbook kept at the Pasadena Museum of History so the exact date and page number were not included).

Coda: Residing in the Oriental Garden

While in Pasadena, I conducted archival research in a variety of spaces: the Pasadena Public Library, the CalTech Archives, the Pasadena Museum of History, and the Huntington Library. After spending a few days reading through and photographing the Playhouse's programs at the Huntington, I decided to take advantage of some extra time I had to explore and enjoy the gardens maintained at the estate. One of the last spaces I went to in the collection was the Huntington's famous Japanese garden. It includes a vast collection of plants, but is also decorated with bonsai trees, a red bridge, and a house. I found it fascinating that they would have an entire house in the garden. It was an impressive structure.

I have since learned that when Henry Huntington started building his Japanese garden on the estate in 1911, he purchased a number of plants and materials from an art dealer named George Taylor Marsh. Marsh had created a commercial tea room and garden in Pasadena, importing many items from Japan, including a two-story house. When the commercial venture failed, Marsh sold everything in the garden to Huntington. It turns out that when the garden moved to the Huntington estate, so did the Japanese immigrant family Marsh had hired to maintain the garden.

Chiyoza and Tsune Goto immigrated to the United States from Japan and had three boys. Like Marsh, Henry Huntington paid the Gotos to maintain the garden. However, he also paid them to live in the garden. While they technically lived in a small cottage behind the imported Japanese house, during the daytime, if they were not working on the garden they were encouraged to spend time in the house wearing

traditional Japanese clothing.⁵¹ The Huntington's digital library includes photographs of Tsune Goto in a kimono in front of the house. The Gotos lived in the garden from 1911 to 1913. The Huntington estate was not opened to the public until 1928. So those who would have seen the Gotos in the garden would have been guests into the private space created by Henry Huntington for his wife Arabella. The Gotos' presence and performance in the Japanese garden echoes a long history of colonial exhibition in the tradition of American Orientalism. But it also reveals the textured and intersectional history of gardens as a significant site of that discourse and imagination. The Gotos' labor maintained the garden but then their performance maintained the illusion of commercial Orientalism.

When the Pasadena Drama League staged their performances in the gardens of its members, there was already an established tradition of American Orientalism being performed in Pasadena gardens. The gardens offered an imperial gaze where the entirety of the globe could be seen in a single walk. Representing East Asian bodies (whether real or representative) was a means of exerting imperial power over those bodies. But the gardens were sites of pleasure as well as power. And they still are. They continue to offer an escape and the promise of rejuvenation. The Huntington Gardens remain opened. And the musical *Waterfall*, as of this writing, is making the regional theatre rounds. Both perpetuate the romanticized vision of Japanese gardens and a living discourse of American Orientalism. White women at the turn of the twentieth century, including those in the Pasadena Drama League,

⁵¹ Naomi Hirahara, *Green Makers: Japanese American Gardeners in Southern California* (Los Angeles: Southern California Gardeners Federation, 2000).

contributed to the contours, vitality, and pervasiveness of that discourse. Their cultivation of the gardens and their amateur performances produced social and cultural consequences for themselves and the Asian Americans around them.



Figure 16. Tsune Goto and her child in Japanese Tea Garden. "Marsh Japanese tea garden house, circa 1910." The Huntington Library. Photo Archive.
<http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15150coll8/id/3820/rec/3>. Accessed February 5, 2017.



Figure 17. Tsune Goto and her son in the Japanese Tea Garden. "Marsh Japanese tea garden house, circa 1910." The Huntington Library. Photo Archive.
<http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15150coll8/id/3821/rec/4>. Accessed February 5, 2017.



Figure 18. Photograph of Chiyoza Goto. "Chiyoza Goto." The Huntington Library. Photo Archive. <http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15150coll8/id/3824/rec/2>. Accessed February 5, 2017.



Figure 19. Photograph of Eleanor Bissell. Taken from a newspaper cut out and pasted into scrapbook. Eleanor Bissell Scrapbooks. Scrapbook #1. Pasadena Museum of History. Photograph taken by Allan Davis.

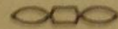
CAST

"TOLD IN A CHINESE GARDEN"

BY

CONSTANCE GRINNELL WILCOX

Li-Ti	Dorothy Finer
Lang-Tai-Tai.....	Elizabeth Flint
Ling-Tai-Tai	Mrs. Robert Welles
Tai-Lo	Robert Welles
Wang-Chu-Mo	Frank Little
Poa-Ting-Fang	Maurice Wells
Page	Don Stoner
Guard	Herman Abrams
Guard	William David
Scribe	Edward Novis
Runner	Earl Huggins



"THEIR ANNIVERSARY"

BY

MRS. ALICE C. D. RILEY

Flora Drummond	Mrs. Clinton C. Clarke
Jane Jones.....	Eloise Stirling
Nora	Grace McLenore
Gerald Drummond	George Judd
Tom Jones.....	Robert Clark
Messenger Boy.....	Earl Huggins

Oriental furniture, costumes and accessories by courtesy
of Miss Grace Nicholson, Mrs. James Neill and Gerlach.

Figure 20. Program note for *Told in a Chinese Garden* and *Their Anniversary*. At the bottom of the program, there is a note that acknowledges that the "Oriental furniture, costume, and accessories [came] by courtesy of Miss Grace Nicholson, Mrs. James Neill and Gerlach." Taken from a copy of the program pasted into a scrapbook. Eleanor Bissell Scrapbooks. Scrapbook #1. Pasadena Museum of History. Photograph taken by Allan Davis.

Chapter 4: The Pittsburgh Drama League: Department Store Utopias and the Curation of Whiteness

On the evening of May 28, 1936, the Olympian Players took to the amateur stage at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House to perform *Breeders*, a one-act by Randolph Edmonds. Originally organized as the Baptist Church Dramatic Club in 1923, the Olympian Players were a celebrated African American theatre troupe with a long history of activity in Pittsburgh. In 1931, they worked with five other African American theatre companies to organize the Pittsburgh Negro Drama League. Part of the reason they organized the Pittsburgh Negro Drama League was because they had spent years applying to participate in an annual amateur play competition held by the Pittsburgh Drama League to no avail. Even the Olympian Players' request in 1932 just to be listed as an affiliated little theatre company associated with the Pittsburgh Drama League was denied. But by 1936, at the Twelfth Annual Amateur Play Competition, the Pittsburgh Drama League finally allowed the Olympian Players to compete and perform in what had become a fierce drama tournament for amateur theatre organizations throughout the state of Pennsylvania. *Breeders* was their submission.

Because the Irene Kaufmann Settlement house—where the Pittsburgh Drama League held the competition—was located in the Hill District, the discriminatory policy was a bit glaring. The Hill District had always had a large African American population, but by 1936, almost half of the residents in that area of the city were black. The Pittsburgh Drama League had held their competition in the East Liberty

Carnegie Library for the first few years. But when construction ended in 1931 on the Theresa L. Kaufmann Auditorium at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House, the Pittsburgh Drama League relocated the event and took advantage of the new facilities.¹ Between the state of the art venue and the League's consistent support of various types of amateur theatre, the competition developed a strong reputation over the years. By the time the Olympian Players were allowed to participate, the competition drew entries from a wide variety of little theatre troupes, drama auxiliaries of local clubs, and school-affiliated companies. Participants not only came from different parts of Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania, but also traveled from Ohio, West Virginia, and New York.

The various performers poured into the area of the city that since the nineteenth century had been referred to as "Little Haiti." For most of the nineteenth century, African Americans lived among various European immigrant populations, particularly Irish, German Jewish, and Italian neighbors. But throughout the turn of the twentieth century, the Great Migration of African Americans from the American South into Northeastern and Midwestern cities completely changed the composition of the Hill District. By the 1930s, 45 percent of the Hill District was black. And most of them were concentrated in the Lower Hill while newer immigrant arrivals from Eastern and Southern Europe populated in enclaves in other areas of the district. While the Hill District suffered overcrowding and depreciated housing conditions, African American professional organizations, political groups, and sports teams also

¹ The Theresa L. Kaufmann Auditorium built at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House in Pittsburgh should not be confused for the Theresa L. Kaufmann Auditorium (now known as the Kaufmann Concert Hall) located on Lexington Avenue at E 92nd Street in New York City. However, both structures were built by Henry Kaufmann as memorials to his wife.

flourished in the area. And the success of the jazz and blues scenes filled venues like clubs that also featured dance and theatre pieces. Churches were instrumental to fostering the formation of drama auxiliaries or community players. But until the Olympians were accepted in 1936, none of that excitement among African Americans for amateur performance was evident at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House or fostered by the Pittsburgh Drama League.

On that May evening, the Olympians told a harrowing story of a young black woman who decides to take her own life rather than remain a slave or bear children into slavery. *Breeders* takes place in a slave cabin and begins with Ruth scolding her mother Mammy for praying and crying all of the time. Mammy explains that it has only been a month since an overseer shot her son Jim and within a year since the overseer beat her son Harry to death. She has not managed to change anything in their rooms. Mammy explains to Ruth that she cannot understand the pain until she has children of her own. Soon, Ruth's lover David arrives. Amidst their professions of adulation for one another, Ruth explains to David that she has no interest in having children in the future. She sees no point in bringing a child into slavery. She also reveals that she has access to poison that she intends to take if the owner of the plantation ever tries to sell her to some place without David. Eventually, the overseer arrives with a larger slave named Salem. The Master wants to give Ruth to Salem as his fifth wife so she can start breeding children. David tries to run Salem away with a razor. When they begin to fight, David is inadvertently stabbed and dies. Salem runs to tell the overseer what has transpired and Mammy tries to console Ruth, letting her know that black women have no choice about their lot in life. She explains to her

daughter, “Dere ain't nothing else yuh can do. In dis world black women ain't nothing but breeders, tuh have chilluns fuh de white folks tuh sell down de river lak dey do horses and cows.”² Ruth proclaims, “Ah ain't gwine tuh be no breeder,” and proceeds to drink the poison. She dies gruesomely in Mammy’s arms, screaming about the pain as her insides burn. The play ends with Mammy praying to God, explaining she does not want to question His justice and mercy but implores when things will be better for black people. Randolph Edmonds calls for the curtain to fall as the audience see a “spiritual look” come on Mammy’s face after she expresses that she will die soon and finally be reunited with her family.

By 1936, the African American population in Pittsburgh had grown exponentially. Between 1920 and 1940, the city’s black population nearly doubled, increasing from 37,500 to 62,200. Many black men and women came from cities and towns in the South, particularly Birmingham, Alabama. They sought employment in the factories of the city and escape from racial violence. However, with the height of the Great Depression, 1936 also left 50 percent of black men in the city unemployed. Employment for black women was worse. Presenting a story on slavery set in the South would have represented the dialect and history of the growing “large, impoverished, and unskilled black working-class” population that had migrated from Birmingham to Pittsburgh.³ But the Olympian Players also staged a story that seemed to resonate with the audiences that were gathered in the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House that night.

² Randolph Edmonds, *Breeders in Six Plays for a Negro Theatre* (Boston, MA: Walter H. Baker, 1934), 23.

³ Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott, *Fly Away: The Great African American Cultural Migrations* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 145.

The year the Pittsburgh Drama League permitted the Olympian Players to participate, the competition was smaller than it had been in previous years. The Twelfth Annual Competition stretched over two days rather than the regular four. With eight presentations instead of the usual sixteen, audiences, newspaper critics, and the judge enjoyed four shows each night. Awards were presented for both stage design and acting, but the largest cash prize, acclaim, and honor to possess a small bronze replica of the Winged Nike of Samothrace—which they would retain until the following year’s competition—went to the best play.⁴ On May 28, after the four plays concluded for that evening, a judge did not give the Olympian Players the Best Play Award. However, *Breeders* won the hearts of the audience. One Pittsburgh newspaper theatre critic lamented the loss, writing, “The Olympian Players, who presented a fine production of ‘Breeders,’ may console themselves for not getting a prize by knowing that they were a popular choice for one prize or another, and that the judgment of the adjudicator was not the reaction of the audience in general.”⁵ The same reviewer explained that he understood why the judge chose a group called the Masquers as the first place winners, but expressed that he was very confused why the Irene Kaufmann Settlement (IKS) Players came in second in the competition. It might not be out of the realm of possibility that the IKS Players were favored because they were the resident company of the very venue where the Pittsburgh Drama League held the competition.

⁴ The Pittsburgh Drama League stated that whichever non-professional organization won the annual competitions three times would get to permanently keep (what they called) the “Samuel French Trophy.”

⁵ Don Hall, “The Little Theatres: Masquers Take Top Honors in Twelfth Annual Contest of Pittsburgh Drama League.” This was preserved as a newspaper clipping in the Pittsburgh Drama League archives and they did not include the name of the Pittsburgh newspaper that it came from. As of this date, it is also incorrectly included in the 1933 newspaper clipping folder. See Box labeled Drama League Clippings and Folder 1933. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

And the Pittsburgh Drama League owed much of their success, influence, and existence to the family and business that was responsible for building the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House.

Both the settlement house and its impressive auditorium existed because of the charitable donations of Henry Kaufmann. Henry Kaufmann was one of four German Jewish brothers who immigrated to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, settled in Pittsburgh, and established one of the most successful department store companies in the country. Like many other Jewish immigrants, the Kaufmann brothers, unable to secure wage labor in factories due to discrimination, started their own small business. Within a few decades they opened Kaufmann's Big Store, a large department store in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh. The Kaufmann brothers and their children would go on to donate to a lot of artistic and civic causes in the city. The Irene Kaufmann Settlement House represented one of their efforts. Nestled in the area of the Hill District populated by Jewish enclaves, the settlement house was built as a community center for Jewish immigrants, a population that also grew rapidly throughout the early twentieth century. The IKS Players performed some Yiddish skits through the years. At competitions, they regularly performed plays by popular Jewish American playwrights.⁶ The IKS Players were also frequently rewarded at the annual play competition.

⁶ For example, the IKS Players performed a number of one acts by George Kaufman. George Kaufman had absolutely no relationship with the Kaufmanns who built the settlement house or owned Kaufmann's department stores. He was, however, the son of a profession theatre critic in Pittsburgh named William Kaufman. Furthermore, he is famous for winning two Pulitzer Prizes. He co-wrote *Of Thee I Sing*, the first musical to win a Pulitzer for Drama, with the Gershwin brothers and Morrie Ryskind. He later won a second Pulitzer for his comedy *You Can't Take It With You*.

The Pittsburgh Drama League itself was a beneficiary of the Kaufmann department store's support. The Pittsburgh Drama League was able to advertise their annual competition in Kaufmann's Big Store. They received financial assistance to print flyers and programs for the event from Kaufmann's. The annual cash prizes given to award winners were occasionally provided for by Kaufmann's. It is entirely possible that the various props and costumes used during the performances in the annual competitions could have come from Kaufmann's Big Store: either purchased at the store or donated as a means of advertisement. The Pittsburgh Drama League's annual competition happened because of the influence and patronage of Kaufmann's department store. In fact, the operations, focus, and success of the Pittsburgh Drama League as an enterprise hinged on their collaboration with and emulation of the department store. That relationship encouraged the Pittsburgh Drama League to embrace and celebrate performances by European immigrants while discriminating against the amateur activities of African Americans, extending a white racial identity to immigrant populations that depended on an oppositional relationship to blackness.

The Pittsburgh Drama League has a different history than the centers in Washington, D.C. and Pasadena. The political concerns and demographics of their membership were different. They pursued different goals and projects. And, for the sole exception of the New York chapter, the Pittsburgh Drama League lasted longer as an organization than most of their counterparts. Members in Pittsburgh were neither the affluent wives of national politicians nor suffragist activists. The Pittsburgh Center did not organize political parades or manage a children's theatre. They also tended to lack the financial resources enjoyed by the women in Pasadena.

Many of them tended to be school teachers or belonged to the rising professional-managerial class, which is to say those people who filled the jobs that were salaried and primarily required mental rather than physical labor.⁷ A theatre and school very much like the Pasadena Playhouse developed in Pittsburgh by the end of the 1930s, but the Pittsburgh Playhouse did not have the type of relationship with the Pittsburgh Center that developed between the Pasadena Center and its Playhouse. For the exception of a few performances staged by the Pittsburgh Drama League Players and a few radio plays, the Pittsburgh Drama League rarely organized its members to perform. With the active and vibrant amateur theatre scene in Pittsburgh, they did not need to inspire interest in or motivate support for non-professional performance. There was plenty of it. Their mission was not to produce, but rather to curate. The strategies of curation were fostered and informed by the Pittsburgh Drama League's long relationship not with politics or even commercial theatre, but instead the Kaufmann's department store. Their curatorial decisions repeatedly worked to extend whiteness as a racial identity to the various ethnic groups that had emigrated from Europe while denying such access and privileges to African American arrivals.

Founded in 1913, the Pittsburgh Drama League existed well into the 1980s. However, their most dynamic period of activity was between 1921 and 1946 when they published a local bulletin called *The Drama Review* (later renamed the *Digest*),

⁷ The professional-managerial class is a term that was created in the 1970s by John and Barbara Ehrenreich. It refers to people who were trained in managerial skills that removed them from the proletariat but kept them from belonging to the bourgeoisie. The professional-managerial class tends to have access to professions because of training and education. Some representative professions would include social workers, engineers, accountants, clerks, nurses, and store managers. See Michael Schwartz, *Broadway and Corporate Capitalism: The Rise of the Professional-Managerial Class, 1900–1920* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-49.

coordinated the annual amateur play competition, convened an annual national institute dedicated to promoting the teaching of drama and theatre, and organized cultural theatre exhibits. These activities would not have been possible without the financial support and physical space provided by the successful department store. But they also reflected an ideology towards selection, imagination, and cultural preservation via material things that department stores like Kaufmann's used in the twentieth century to increase the consumption of material goods and services. In other words, more than facilitating the activities of the League, Kaufmann's department store informed the ideology and strategies deployed by the Pittsburgh Drama League.

At the turn of the twentieth century, department stores were key sites, particularly for women, where intersectional identities were navigated, clashed, and forged. Department stores became places for middle-class women to find material goods to populate their lives and decorate their homes, but they also became destination locations defined by the experiences they offered. Like theatres manufacturing new sets and props, department stores continually rearranged their floors and merchandise to create new possibilities, experiences, and utopias for customers to explore and inhabit. Those new spaces and things that populated them were purposefully curated to produce a desire for consumption. As William Leach argues in his history of department stores, although technological advances propelled the means of mass production *and* economic circumstances facilitated the capacity for mass consumption, the culture of the United States needed to be enticed and instructed to view the accumulation and consumption of material items as morally

virtuous. Department stores were instrumental to conveying those ideologies, which they did through the goods they provided *and* the experiences they cultivated.

They were gendered sites spatially and relationally designed around distinctions in class; however, the materials and the experiences department stores produced were also racialized. Robin Bernstein and Grace Elizabeth Hale have outlined how the turn of the twentieth century brought a proliferation of a racialized material culture. Department stores—their spaces and their strategies—played a significant role in proliferating racialized materials into a culture of segregation. Curation was one of those strategies. It had racializing and gendering dynamics, as well as class-shaping effects. And it was the major strategy deployed by the Pittsburgh Drama League throughout its collaboration with Kaufmann’s Big Store.

Curation is a strategy of power. It is a decision to stage one world and to deny resources or materials to manifest another. The history of the Pittsburgh Drama League is a history of curation—organization, review, and denial informed by the ideologies and strategies learned through a cooperative relationship with a successful department store. The strategies and spaces of department stores were racialized and gendered. The amateur theatre that benefitted by the patronage of businesses like Kaufmann’s and curatorial efforts by the Pittsburgh Drama League must be analyzed in light of these dynamics. Doing so reveals the perpetuation of a white identity politics narrative woven into certain histories of the Little Theatre Movement. Cultural canonization and curation of certain white ethnic folk theatres in amateur theatre was a means by which ethnic identities located “between whiteness” were able to move into discourses of legitimacy and socialized whiteness. This process

depended on denying access to African American groups like the Olympian Players or failing to award them when they performed so well; however, it also included the active choice to elevate and celebrate the folk cultures of various European immigrant groups. Ignoring the use of amateur theatre as a social tactic in the history of the Little Theatre Movement produces narratives that reify and naturalize the boundaries and power dynamics of whiteness formed in the twentieth century. Theatre historians perpetuate a racial project informed by assimilationist ideologies. Examining how white identity politics impacted the formation of amateur theatre in Pittsburgh and the efforts of the Pittsburgh Drama League recognizes and challenges the pull of assimilationist narratives. In this chapter, I outline the basic history of the Drama League in Pittsburgh before discussing the history of department stores in the United States and where Kaufmann's Big Store fit into the national landscape. Then I analyze different sites of the Drama League's curation in practice—their bulletins, annual competitions, and cultural exhibits—to examine how curation contributed to a racialized and gendered amateur theatre.

From Ideological Education to Material Curation: A History of Institutions Working with the Pittsburgh Drama League

At first glance, one might assume the social institutions that would have had the largest impact on the formation and work of the Pittsburgh Drama League would have been educational organizations like high schools or colleges. In 1914, the Carnegie Institute of Technology established the first four year Bachelor of Arts degree in theatre. The annual competitions often saw entrants from drama clubs

connected to schools. Many of the active members of the Pittsburgh Center were teachers or professors in high schools, normal schools, and various colleges in the area. One of the most active and honored presidents of the Pittsburgh Drama League, Elmer Kenyon, was a high school teacher and later a professor at Carnegie Tech. The role of educational institutions was certainly important to the history of the Pittsburgh Drama League; however, the Center succeeded and thrived because of its tightly-bound relationship to Kaufmann's department store. The Pittsburgh Center existed for nearly a decade before it organized any activity or effort of particular note. And it was the department store, not the schools, that fueled and informed the shape of their activities in their most productive and influential period between 1921 and 1946.

The Pittsburgh Drama League was founded in 1913 under the auspices of the College Club. Their stated purpose was to interest the public in worthwhile plays, lectures by prominent speakers, study courses, celebrity teas, and weekly bulletins. The early days of the Pittsburgh Center were defined by their connection to the institutions of higher education in the city. The first chair of Carnegie Tech's drama department, Thomas Woods Stevens, was a nationally renowned pageant master who collaborated regularly with Percy MacKaye. Stevens was often a keynote speaker at national conferences for the Drama League and the American Pageant Association. He visited Drama League centers around the country to provide lectures on drama, theatre education, or practical elements of staging practices. The very first president of the Pittsburgh Drama League, Lincoln Gibbs, was himself an English professor at the University of Pittsburgh. But unlike Washington, D.C.'s Center, which boasted a

flurry of activity in its first two years, the Pittsburgh Center was notably less ambitious in the beginning.

Before the Great War, the League in Pittsburgh focused on coordinating lecture series, group readings, and produced a modest local bulletin reviewing plays produced professionally in the area. However, a portion of the group's membership wanted the group to do more. In March 1915, *The Gazette Times* reported that a faction within the center was seeking to oust Gibbs from his presidency. The article indicated that trouble which had been apparent in the organization for the past year was culminating in their first annual meeting at the Hotel Schenley, noting,

The friction has been so manifest that few board meetings during the years were attended by a quorum and efforts in the way of lectures and entertainments proposed for the building up of the center financially have not been supported.⁸

Apparently, one of the main criticisms of Gibbs' administration was that the league had not become as important socially as the members had wanted. Members of the Pittsburgh chapter attended and played significant roles at the national conventions, but it would not be until the 1920s when the Pittsburgh Center itself became a nationally recognized and envied body within the organization.

The prestige came about, in part, because of the presidency of Elmer Kenyon and the relationship he forged between the Pittsburgh Center, its members, and the Kaufmann department store. Kenyon had a track record for encouraging and inspiring a number of people to join the organization and take active roles. And his enthusiasm helped cultivate the relationship with the store so the Pittsburgh Center could have

⁸ "Politics Vie with Art in Drama League: Faction Wants to Oust President Gibbs at Election Tuesday," *The Gazette Times*, March 1, 1915, 12.

access to the financial support and resources that led to its most successful endeavors between 1921 and 1946. The Pittsburgh Center organized a small troupe of amateur players and continued to hold lectures, teas, and play readings like many other chapters of the Drama League. But cooperating with Kaufmann's provided the resources to do more, setting it apart as an organization. When economic turmoil in the 1930s destroyed the national organization, the Pittsburgh Center continued undeterred. In fact, it expanded its efforts and activities. This was due in no small part to the unwavering support of Kaufmann's: the store, the settlement house, and the family. As Kaufmann's department store weathered the Great Depression, the Pittsburgh Drama League managed to continue its annual competition, print and distribute its bulletin, and establish an annual conference or institute on theatre education. After serving as president of the Pittsburgh Center for over 10 years, Kenyon left Pittsburgh to work with New York's Theatre Guild. He traveled around the country giving lectures as an affiliated member in 1930. But then he returned and became the chair of Carnegie Tech's drama department. He maintained a presence in the Pittsburgh Drama League as an Honorary President, but the greatest impact he had was in forging the interests of the commercial benefactor to the club of theatre enthusiasts.

Kaufmann's department store emerged out of a paint-by-numbers immigrant success story and quickly established itself as a major component of downtown Pittsburgh life at the turn of the century. In the 1870s, four German Jewish brothers immigrated to Pittsburgh and founded a men's clothing store. They came one by one. As soon as each brother saved up enough money, they paid for their next brother to

make the journey. Apparently, whoever was the most recent to arrive was responsible for sleeping at the store to protect the merchandise. After they moved their shop downtown, they spent the next fifty years setting up a bit of a financial empire. Their department store was the largest in Pittsburgh. At twelve stories tall, they marketed it as The Big Store. The Kaufmann's never reached the wealth of Andrew Carnegie, but they were significant philanthropists in the history of Pittsburgh. Notably, when Henry and Theresa Kaufmann lost their daughter, they built a new structure for the Columbian School and Settlement that they named in her honor. The Irene Kaufmann Settlement house continued a history of serving primarily Jewish immigrants in the city at a time when Jews were not seen as white.

The Kaufmann's story mirrored that of many other German Jewish families that settled in Pittsburgh in the nineteenth century. Many set up similar shops, dominating in "retailing, wholesaling, and manufacturing dry goods, clothing, and liquor."⁹ The Jewish population in Pittsburgh developed slowly over the nineteenth century. By the 1870s there were only about 75 Jewish families in the city, but they established social, economic, and cultural institutions that would be the bedrock for future immigrants. In addition to synagogues, the German Jews created the United Hebrew Relief Association, which "assisted in the relief of local Jewish problems such as desertion, child support, widows' pensions, etc."¹⁰ As they became affluent, German Jews moved out of the Hill District (usually to Allegheny City), but they presided over the management of the benefit organizations that served their "poorer

⁹ Myrna Silverman, *Strategies for Social Mobility: Family, Kinship, and Ethnicity within Jewish Families in Pittsburgh* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1989), 26

¹⁰ Myrna Silverman, *Strategies for Social Mobility*, 28.

cousins” who immigrated between 1880 and 1920. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Kaufmann’s department store was successful enough for them to donate generously to benefit organizations, civic causes, and arts projects.

The need for a center like the Kaufmann Settlement House increased when European immigration increased after 1890. By 1897, there were about 10,000 Jews in Pittsburgh. But in less than twenty years, there were approximately 40,000 Jews in the city. The Kaufmanns established the settlement house in the Hill District because that is where most of the Eastern and Southern European immigrants settled. Of all the new arrivals into Pittsburgh from Poland, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Lithuania, Hungary, and Germany, 70 percent were Jewish. Political and economic unrest in Europe spurred mass immigration. Job opportunities offered to men in the steel industry resulted in Pittsburgh becoming a very attractive destination for immigrants as it was for African Americans migrating out of the American South. As David Roediger has written, the European “immigrants and their children were the main objects of Progressive reform and nativist hatred, as well as the backbone of the New Deal coalition.”¹¹ They played a crucial role in remaking the nation’s working class, particularly in a highly industrial city like Pittsburgh. The Kaufmann Settlement House was a key site to facilitate the assimilation of new arrivals and to instruct them on how to learn the cultural and racial order of things in their new home.

¹¹ David R. Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White, The Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 9.

Roediger argues that upon arrival, Eastern and Southern European immigrants had to learn the racial binary that operated in the United States, find where they fit in it, and adapt the racial categories they brought with them. When Eastern and Southern Europeans arrived, “experts” might have categorized them in the larger Caucasian racial category; however, their subcategorization as Slavic or Mediterranean would have played a larger role in social experiences and interactions, distancing them from whiteness. According to Roediger, the history of European immigration in the early twentieth century is a history of racial formation, where immigrants’ inclusion into the working class, attaining housing through the New Deal, and unifying around the realization that it was necessary to define themselves against African Americans allowed immigrants to work towards whiteness. Key to Roediger’s argument is a sense that such immigrants were, upon arrival, “between whiteness.” European immigrants who were not initially seen as white had a very different experience than African Americans, Hispanic Americans, or Asian Americans, primarily because they did not suffer the same exclusionary technologies that shaped racial identity politics. Roediger argues that it is best to consider such immigration populations as “between whiteness” precisely because they “existed between nonwhiteness and full inclusion as whiteness.”¹² To describe them either as non-white or “not quite white” replicates an impulse to imagine their experience as only ever determined by the black/white binary. Maintaining the Kaufmann Settlement House as a site for Jewish immigrants or other immigrants from European communities, and not a space for African Americans, would have been one of many means to inculcate that sense of order and

¹² David Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness*, 20.

racial alignment. This would have been particularly true given that with the Great Migration, the Hill District's African American population surrounding the immigrant enclaves would have kept growing throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

The Settlement House also served as one site of commonality between the new Jewish immigrants and more established German Jews. Culturally and religiously, German Jews shared little in common with the newer generation of Slavic and Romanian Jews. They had much closer ties with German Christians.¹³ Religious traditions and rituals, as well as language barriers, kept Jewish groups separated in Pittsburgh until the 1930s. One exception to that general rule was the Kaufmann Settlement House. It was designed to help the new arrivals find jobs and housing, offer relief where necessary, and provide entertainment to the community. The Kaufmanns managed to rival Carnegie's commitment to investing in the city.

Edgar J. Kaufmann, Irene's cousin and the president of Kaufmann's in the second generation, was a big benefactor to the arts—both publically and privately. Famously, he commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design both his residence (*Fallingwater*) and his office on the twelfth floor of the Big Store. When Edgar Kaufmann redesigned the Big Store in 1929, he commissioned an artist to paint ten large murals depicting the history of commerce to hang on the main floor. The Drama League coordinated a contest for schools where entrants staged original, short skits based on the murals. The Kaufmanns supported the visual and performing arts and the arts supported their business. Kaufmann's department store was a merchandising

¹³ Myrna Silverman, *Strategies for Social Mobility*, 30.

business built on the consumption of material goods by middle-class shoppers. Their customers were the ones that belonged to the Pittsburgh Drama League.

As people moved in and out Pittsburgh, members and leaders circulated in and out of the organization. Unlike the membership in Pasadena and Washington, the members of the Pittsburgh center were not predominantly the wives of affluent politicians or professors nor the inheritors of family estates. They did not have access to the financial resources to build a theatre. They were from working and middle-class positions: teachers in high school, lecturers at oratory programs, studio artists, office secretaries, bank clerks, and small business managers. The organization had a long run of men and women serving in leadership positions and participating in the various activities the group organized over the years.

The Pittsburgh Drama League had a long history. They continued to organize summer theatre camps or lecture series well into the 1980s. Outside of the New York chapter, no other center of the Drama League operated that long. However, 1946 marked the last year that they edited and published the bulletin. At that point, they had not organized the annual amateur play competition for four years. There were no amateur performances in members' homes or on the radio. And there were no more conferences. The organization continued in name, but its role in the lives of its members and the social activities of Pittsburgh greatly diminished after 1946. Unsurprisingly, 1946 was also the year that Edgar Kaufmann sold the Kaufmann chain of department stores, including the Big Store in Pittsburgh, to the May Department Store Company. The post-war era marked a shift in department store

history, a shift that impacted the vitality and influence of the Pittsburgh Drama League.

Materialized Utopias: Department Stores and Theatre

Department stores changed the landscape and values of cultural life in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. As distributors of merchandise, they were a key site where an economy based on mass production collided with a growing culture of mass consumption. And they were sites where class, racial, and gendered identities were organized and navigated. Much attention has been paid to the financial tools and strategies department stores pioneered with the invention of credit plans. But the front of house operations that department stores used to bring in customers were as important as their innovative fiscal practices. As mentioned, William Leach has argued that through enticing arrangements of material goods and staged experiences, department stores cultivated a cultural desire for abundance. Repeatedly, throughout his argument, Leach emphasizes that there was a clear overlap in a litany of ways between the professional theatre of the era and department stores. But there were also significant connections and overlaps with department stores and the burgeoning amateur theatre of the time, some which were quite distinct from those inspired by the relationship with professional theatre. Furthermore, like residential gardens and amateur theatre, department stores were femininely gendered social spaces. Considering the connections between the institutions reveals how women shaped whiteness through a curation of materialized utopias.

The main connection Leach found between department stores and professional theatre was the increased emphasis on spectacle. He argues that commercial theatre's emphasis on tableaux impacted how department store managers and owners dressed windows, arranged floors, and set up marketing. As a result of the focus, department stores depended on hiring theatre designers to create compelling and captivating displays.¹⁴ Norman bel Geddes, for example, moved back and forth between designing for theatres in New York and department stores in the city. Department stores designed floors so that they could continually be rearranged—not just in term of the goods available, but in the very layout of the floor that customers could explore. Floors were basically stages with variable sets and props that could be used to stage new worlds and new desires for their customers. Department stores needed to do more than supply merchandise: they had to create a new culture that did not disparage debt and saw the acquisition of new material goods as morally good. Floor and window design as well as other forms of marketing were basically what Jill Dolan has referred to as utopian performatives. For Dolan, theatre has had a capacity to enact utopian performatives because it arranges the vision of a utopia that does not exist in reality, but by virtue of performance comes into existence for the audience present for the enactment.¹⁵ In department stores, the utopian performances were enacted for middle-class, white women. Whether through policy or practices, department stores were not designed as inviting spaces for women of color. The stores sold racialized goods that supported white supremacist ideologies and they

¹⁴ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

¹⁵ Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

often enacted surveillance tactics targeting women of color. This disparity in treatment provided some customers with a dystopic experience. That alienation further supported the department store's effort to create a grand experience for customers of a particular racial, gender, and class identity. Department stores both staged and operated as materialized utopias that were racialized and gendered.

Other scholars have examined the connections between professional theatre and department stores, noting the legacy of department stores as gendered social spaces. Marlis Schweitzer, for example, argues that professional theatre acted as an early fashion runway, strategically and purposefully displaying the clothing and home goods that could be purchased at the department store that happened to be investing in the show or paying for its advertising. Commercial theatre was a benefactor of department stores but also the store's main form of advertisement outside of newspapers or magazines. The advantage of theatre over print was that theatre could place the fashion and goods in idealized worlds of fantasy.¹⁶ Theatres and department stores were destinations of fantasy and desire, and at the turn of the twentieth century they were increasingly sites of escape and fantasy for women. Dorothy Chansky has indicated how middle-class women made frequenting theatre matinees and shopping at department stores connected events. Theatre managers advertised matinees as events for women, particularly mothers with children out of school on the weekends.¹⁷ Professional theatres were increasingly built near the burgeoning department stores.

¹⁶ Marlis Schweitzer, *When Broadway was the Runway: Theatre, Fashion, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

¹⁷ Dorothy Chansky, *Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and American Audiences* (Carbondale, IL: University of Southern Illinois Press, 2005), 107-148.

Those department stores were complex sites where gender, race, and class divisions were embodied and contested. According to Susan Porter Benson's classic work, *Counter Cultures*, department stores were built on a triangulated relationship between middle-class female customers, professional male managers and floor coordinators, and working-class saleswomen. Benson argues this triangulation resulted in a varying and alternating balance of power and alliances, impacting the intersections of class and gender based identities.¹⁸ On the outset, managers and saleswomen collaborated to convince their female customers to purchase as many items as possible. Sometimes the middle-class customers and the managers enjoyed the opportunity mutually to exploit the labor of the working-class women. Other times, saleswomen and female customers could align to subvert the male managers' attempts to exploit them both. In so many ways, these relationships hinged on relational performances. For example, Benson details how the working-class women were hired by male managers to create a fantasy experience for middle-class women, enticing them to enter into, enjoy, and purchase the world and material goods presented to them. The saleswomen, many of whom tended to be immigrants, wore clothes they otherwise could not afford and were coached on how to speak. The managers wanted the saleswomen to perform a class and gendered identity that resembled the customers they were seeking to coax and satisfy, not necessarily their own.

¹⁸ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

In Pittsburgh, a city that offered many industrial jobs for male immigrants and very few opportunities for female immigrants, working in a department store was a rare place for women to earn money and transition into American life.¹⁹ For the specificity of Pittsburgh, I would add to Benson's intersection of identities that the saleswomen were asked perform a gendered whiteness, a whiteness connected to an acquisition and organization of material goods. Because at the end of the day, the types of saleswoman jobs that Benson talks about went to female European immigrants. African American women were rarely employed in such positions that would have put them on the floor or in contact with the middle-class customers. Similar to the policies put in place by the Postal Service under Albert Burleson, when department stores employed people of color, they put them in positions where their labor was not seen, such as in custodial work. Their labor and presence was erased from the utopia curated and presented to white women. But that curation was not simply through the elimination of bodies, but also through the presentation of material goods that were available for consumption. Alienated from the presence of black bodies, middle-class consumers were free to indulge in a fantasy of segregation that allowed them to take the experience presented in the department stores home with them.

¹⁹ Pittsburgh was notable for not having a lot of opportunities for working-class women. Unlike New York City or places in New England, there were no textile mills or ladies' garment factories, places that generally employed women. Some employment strategies were informed by ethnic background. For example, Italian women did not enter the workforce much at all. Slavic women had no issue seeking employment at the factories that employed their brothers and husbands. Married Jewish women tended to work in the shops owned by their husbands. Unmarried Jewish women were employed frequently at the department stores like Kaufmann's Big Store. See Corinne Azen Krause, "Urbanization without Breakdown: Italian, Jewish, and Slavic Immigrant Women in Pittsburgh, 1900—1945," *Journal of Urban History* 4, no. 3 (May 1978): 291-306.

Compelling work exists on the intersections of whiteness at the turn of the twentieth century and the rise of a particular material culture made possible by mass production. Grace Elizabeth Hale argues that after the era of reconstruction, the greatest export out of the American South was a culture of segregation, one that romanticized a vision of plantation life and a slavery-based racialized social order. Hale indicates that this culture of segregation existed in performing, visual, and literary arts, but it was ubiquitous via material reality.²⁰ As much as the effort produced an iconography that perpetuated the consumption and use of black bodies, it was a culture that produced the contours of whiteness. Furthermore, Robin Bernstein has argued that racialized material objects at the turn of the twentieth century scripted everyday performances. Material objects reflected and produced ideologies connecting innocence and whiteness.²¹ In both Hale and Bernstein's arguments, there is a consideration of the influence of the material objects in prompting or influencing the social formation of whiteness, arguing the impact of innovations in mass production and trends in mass consumption. But both also neglect to consider the spaces in which such materials passed from producers to consumers. Racialized material goods were once merchandise: housed, organized, and marketed in department stores. These gendered spaces where racialized objects were procured and the strategies used to bring customers into those spaces are key to exploring how women contributed to the social formation of whiteness.

²⁰ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 85-198.

²¹ Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

Department stores curated material goods and staged elaborate displays indicating how those goods would fit into customers' lives. The strategies and tactics of display were cultivated through a visual literacy developed by commercial theatre. And as Schwietzler has indicated, those displays on the professional stage brought goods into customer's homes and lives. Certainly, amateur theatre allowed for similar moments to occur. A dress or lamp donated by Kaufmann's to an amateur production would be a little theatre equivalent of product placement. But I want to focus on the activities and efforts of the Pittsburgh Drama League as curatorial themselves. In part, because like the department stores, most of the time they did not directly produce or consume goods, which is to say theatrical productions. They dealt in highlighting and celebrating or ignoring and forgetting. In curating, they fostered certain utopias to be staged, imagined, and performed, while denying the existence or participation of others. The utopia privileged by the Pittsburgh Drama League, like many other engines of the Little Theatre Movement, sought to legitimate and humanize the folk experience and stories of European immigrants from ethnic groups considered "between whiteness." The Pittsburgh Drama League not only had a history of segregating their activities, barring the participation of African American performers and groups, but also of contributing to the cultural process of including more Europeans under an umbrella of white racial identity. Considering the curatorial power the Pittsburgh Drama League exhibited throws into relief the "white ethnic" racial identity politics embedded in the history of the Little Theatre Movement.

A Robust and Admirable Bulletin: The Pittsburgh Drama League's Publication and an Engine for Kaufmann's Big Store

The first concerted effort by the Pittsburgh Drama League that caught the attention, admiration, and envy of other producing centers was without a doubt the publication of their local chapter's bulletin. Since the founding of the national organization, bulletins were viewed as the core tool of the League's mission to uplift the quality of commercial theatre throughout the country. The national organization's main publication initially focused on more educational, historical, and theoretical essays about theatre, expecting local chapters to issue bulletins that would call members' attention to productions worth attending and endorsing. Many producing centers generated bulletins throughout their individual histories, but most were single page reports handed out at gatherings in libraries and few have survived. It is possible to find the bulletins created by the Pasadena Center, but only between the years 1925 and 1931. And those only exist because those were the years that they printed their bulletin in the bi-monthly programs of the Pasadena Playhouse. In contrast, Pittsburgh's bulletin, *The Drama Review*, was a publication unto itself, drawing attention throughout the national organization to the city and the bulletin's editor, Elmer Kenyon. What is clear from the archives for the Pittsburgh Drama League is that *The Drama Review* would not have existed materially or had the expansive scope Kenyon cultivated in the publication without the support of Kaufmann's Big Store. Rather than building a close working relationship with a theatre, like in Pasadena, the Pittsburgh Center joined forces with the city's most influential department store.

Elmer Kenyon served as the president of the Pittsburgh Drama League from 1919 to 1928, but the greatest endeavor he took on during those years was editing *The Drama Review*. Kenyon came from a family connected to the Pittsburgh theatre world. Elmer's father Thomas Kenyon emigrated from Ireland and opened up a dry goods store in the city. By 1904, Thomas Kenyon converted the store into a vaudeville theatre. Opening the Kenyon Theatre in the Northside was quickly followed three year later with the opening of another vaudeville theatre downtown, the Kenyon Opera House. The Schuberts took over the Opera House in 1919 and renamed it the Pitt Theatre. Elmer Kenyon graduate from Harvard in 1913, worked in Chicago for a few years, and then returned to Pittsburgh in 1916 to teach at Schenely High School. He joined the Pittsburgh Drama League and soon became the organization's president.

In January 1921, he started on a project that was no small undertaking. Kenyon managed to create enough content for the bulletin to be published on a weekly basis. The bulletins measured about eight inches in both length and width. They were effectively one long sheet folded over to provide 4 distinct pages. Unless other members shared reports from the national conference, Kenyon generally wrote either an essay or a review for the first page every issue. His essays touched on the purpose of the League, the state of theatre in the US, or some other topic of theatre practice. His reviews were almost exclusively reserved for commercial theatrical productions. The publication was shaped by his voice and as it gained attention in theatrical circles, he drew the attention of the Little Theatre Movement, including the members of the Theatre Guild.

In one of his earliest bulletins, in 1922, Elmer Kenyon wrote about the need for the Drama League. He argued that in 1890 publishers did not publish plays, but by 1922, they represented an important part of the publishing world. Playwriting had improved and it was worth publishing. He continued:

Plays are threatening to rival the novel as popular reading, plays are inveigling groups of fascinated folk everywhere to don the cloak and sword of the amateur stage, plays are made the subject of lectures, university courses, and even formal sermons. Yet the play, or rather the material mean through which it breathes of life, namely, the theatre, is in a bad way.²²

He goes on to address what the leaders in the Drama League tended to discuss: the Drama League needed to exist as a clearinghouse that could teach audiences and prepare them so that they would be ready when a production of a Eugene O'Neill play would come to town. It was up to them to make sure it would not tank. It was, as Dorothy Chansky has explained, an ideology of audience formation. But to understand a main purpose of the bulletin, one has to recognize the dynamics of his foundational points. Kenyon's argument hinges on the belief that the first hurdle was passed and the second lay yet ahead. First, dramatic literature needed to be successfully pioneered as a genre, and then the great work of improving practical theatre could begin.

This is not an incorrect legacy to attribute to the Drama League of America, particularly in their first decade of existence. Between 1910 and 1921, the national organization lobbied publication companies to print and sell plays. Terry Brino-Dean details in his dissertation how local producing centers worked with libraries to

²² Elmer Kenyon, "Why a Drama League?," *The Drama Review* 1, no. 11 (1921). Pittsburgh Drama League Archives, Unnumbered Box Labeled "Pittsburgh Drama League Reviews, 1922-1937," Folder: 1922-23. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

purchase multiple copies of plays for group readings. The Drama League of America worked diligently to signal to publishing companies that there were consumers ready to devour the theatrical world in print.²³ Moreover, as Roxane Heinze-Bradshaw described in her dissertation, publishing companies played an increasingly significant role in the history of theatre because they took a more active interest in publishing plays. She argues that the rise of amateur theatrical activity (how it looked, what it addressed) was tied to the growth of theatrical publishing. Publishers acted as cultural arbiters or middle-men, that certainly responded to the demands of organizations like the Drama League and little theatres throughout the country, but who also implemented their own conservative impulses and economically-driven motives.²⁴ But like many other goods that existed in the American marketplace at the turn of the century, in addition to the consumers and the producers, there were also merchandisers. For Heinze-Bradshaw, the publishing companies and editors acted as middle-men standing between playwrights and readers or amateur theatres. I would suggest that department stores like Kaufmann's Big Store were themselves key players negotiating and controlling a position between publishing companies and potential customers for the then expanding world of dramatic literature because department stores sold the plays.

The Drama Review served a very utilitarian purpose of letting members of the Drama League and other customers in the Big Store know that there were plays for

²³ Terry Brino-Dean, "Aesthetic Revisioning in the Efforts of the Drama League of America, 1910-1931," (PhD dissertation, Indian University, 2002).

²⁴ Roxane Heinze-Bradshaw, "Playtime: U.S. Publishers, Playwrights, and Amateur Play Production in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," (PhD dissertation, The City University of New York, 2013).

sale in the books section. The back of every single copy listed plays that were for sale and the cost of those plays. Supporting the Drama League was a means by which Kaufmann's could advertise to a self-selected and specialized audience. But having free copies of *The Drama Review* in the store could also catch other customers' attention and perhaps lead them to the book section. And Kenyon was certain to remind Edgar Kaufmann and the managers at Kaufmann's not only how much gratitude the League had for their contribution, but also how much capital it was bringing to the Big Store. In June 1927, he wrote them a letter thanking them for printing *The Drama Review* and included a clipping from the *New York Herald Tribune* that praised the existence of the publication and the department store for supporting it. In another letter, he wrote to the store, "The *Review* we are assured, serves a cultural need and reflects high credit upon the civic spirit of your firm."²⁵ Furthermore, every publication of *The Drama Review* indicated its special relationship with the department store. On the front page, below the title of the publication, the names of the Pittsburgh Center and the Drama League, the bulletin number, and Kenyon's name as the editor, each bulletin indicated it was, "Published weekly through the courtesy of Kaufmann's *The Big Store*." Kenyon was certain to continually remind Kaufmann's of the benefits it could receive for such courtesy.

Kaufmann's provided this service to the Drama League for twenty-four years, continuing well after Kenyon and other editors like Helen St. Peter cycled through. According to meeting minutes kept by the leaders of the Pittsburgh Center,

²⁵ For both the clipping from the *New York Herald Tribune* Kenyon sent with his note of gratitude and the letter quoted, see Pittsburgh Drama League Archives. Box 2, Folder VI. B. (34) Correspondence: Kaufmann's. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

Kaufmann's indicated in June 1946 that they would need to temporarily discontinue publication because of a paper shortage, and that was ultimately the end of *The Drama Review*. But in its twenty-four year history, *The Drama Review* existed entirely because of a unique relationship with the department store. Whereas most producing centers that generated bulletins needed to fund the publication and distribution of their reviews or support of certain shows, Pittsburgh had Kaufmann's courtesy to provide both. The Pittsburgh Center only used their treasury funds to pay for mailing the bulletin to members throughout Pittsburgh and to subscribers outside of the city and state.²⁶ By displaying copies of the publication and making them available in the store on whichever floor books were being sold that week, Kaufmann's made a clever marketing move. But they also inserted themselves into the fabric of the burgeoning amateur theatre scene in Pittsburgh.

Working closely with the department store and not needing to spearhead the production of amateur theatre in the city, the Pittsburgh Drama League could use similar strategies of marketing and curation. *The Drama Review's* editorials and critiques became evidence of that curation. On the second and third pages of the publication, notes and information about amateur productions abounded and more voices than Kenyon's emerged. There were announcements as well as reviews. Some little theatres and amateur troupes posted audition calls, others simply posted

²⁶ Gwen Tipton Thompson, a very active member of the organization who is discussed later in the chapter in connection to the annual amateur play competition, wrote to Kenyon a few letters about the distribution of *The Drama Review*. In one she asked if he had considered sending copies to the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs. And in another she wrote, "I am always proud to send two or three of the Drama League Reviews to my friends in other cities, as representative of Pittsburgh's very best in that line." See Pittsburgh Drama League Archives. Box 2. Folder VI. Correspondence: Thompson, Mrs. Lane. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh. Both letters mentioned were written in 1923, the latter on October 17.

announcements of upcoming productions. Various members of the Pittsburgh Center contributed reviews, but there were some consistent authors like Helen St. Peter and Gwen Tipton Thompson. Additional authors tended to hold office in the Pittsburgh Center and either traveled to the national conference to represent Pittsburgh (like St. Peter) or participated in amateur theatrical productions (like Tipton Thompson). Because there was so much activity in the amateur theatre scene in Pittsburgh and surrounding areas, the Pittsburgh Drama League could do more with the bulletin than encourage its members to support certain commercial productions. They could even do more than provide publicity for amateur productions. The Pittsburgh Center was able to actually bulletin and critique amateur theatre. Their tone was primarily celebratory and rarely critical, but they made the bulletins a rare source that catalogues a history of amateur performance in Pittsburgh and surrounding areas.

Not everyone loved the Drama League or its publication. In 1931, the *Pittsburgh Press* published a scathing article about the organization. Written anonymously by someone who claimed to be a former member of the Pittsburgh Center, the article suggests the League killed the fun of theatre with their “graceless school marms pirouetting as 17-year-old Columbines, principles of so-called oratorical schools, hours of fruitless discussion as to the author’s purpose, and much ado about unknown? theatre managers coming to town to represent the theatre world.”²⁷ But more strikingly, the author suggested that “the *Review* only existed because of the charity of Kaufmann’s and the charity of all of Pittsburgh [allowed the

²⁷ Newspaper clipping written by “a former member of the Drama League.” See Box labeled Drama League Clippings and Folder 1931. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

League] to continue.” These criticisms were nothing that the national organization did not face. In their avowed mission of uplift, many critics suggested that the reform of commercial theatre proposed by the Drama League was dull or that the amateur theatre that League members praised so much was often quite lacking in skill.

But racialized as well as aesthetic criticisms existed. While *The Drama Review* highlighted the work of many amateur theatre companies affiliated with a wide range of organizations and clubs, they rarely promoted or even mentioned the work of African Americans. It was not until 1937, when the Negro Playhouse of Pittsburgh opened, that new editors of *The Drama Review* would discuss the presence of African American theatre companies or work. In that publication, the editors expressed that the formation of the theatre was welcomed and would be “filling a gap that had been a sore spot in the local little theatre front for some time.”²⁸ But as Lynne Conner suggests in her history of theatre in Pittsburgh, it is an observation made without a recognition of the irony that the League had played a role in contributing to the struggle for African American artists to form amateur companies and to have their work either celebrated or mentioned by the Pittsburgh Drama League.²⁹ In addition to building the Negro Playhouse of Pittsburgh and organizing the Negro Drama League, African American artists indicated their frustrations with the white identity politics that informed the curatorial practices of the Pittsburgh Center.

²⁸ On the first page of *The Drama Review* published April 1937. As quoted in Lynne Conner, *Pittsburgh in Stages: Two Hundred Years of Theater* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 122.

²⁹ Lynne Conner, *Pittsburgh in Stages*, 123.

The choice not to mention or call attention to the theatrical work of African American artists should be read as more than a racist act of segregation in a bygone era. Fundamentally, the curatorial strategies that praised and highlighted the other work present in Pittsburgh amateur theatre contributed to the social and cultural inclusion of new immigrant populations into the new categories of white ethnics. *The Drama Review*, like most of the Little Theatre Movement, praised the work of immigrant populations working out of settlement houses or companies and groups that performed folk pieces. The amateur theatre valued by Kenyon, St. Peter, Tipton Thompson, and other writers for the *Review* was not just transplanted European theatre: they were highlighting the staged practices of what Shannon Jackson has called “reformances.”³⁰ These reformances had a dual effect of presenting the immigrant Other while representing a process of how a folk culture could be assimilated into the US cultural mainstream.

This is a narrative that set up the formation of white ethnic identities. According to David Roediger, “white ethnicity” was an invention at the turn of the twentieth century that allowed Americans to group all new European immigrants under one racial category while erasing the sense that race was operating as an organizing category. Roediger argues that by the 1920s, “ethnicity” referred to a culture, a nation, or a people. He suggests, it “was used so promiscuously that it seemed to offer little prospect of helping sort out questions of race and immigration in the United States.”³¹ However, the word “ethnic” came to refer to European

³⁰ Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 8-17.

³¹ David Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness*, 21.

minorities like Jews and Italians, while differentiating them from racial minorities like African Americans and Asian Americans. White ethnicity allowed there to be a demarcation between “nation-races” and “color-races.” Nation-races while still seen as minorities, were believed to be better disposed to adjust to assimilating into a liberal democracy. As Mae Ngai has pointed out, the theory of nation-races vs. color-races played a large role in shaping the language of national origins that established quotas and exclusionary restrictions in the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924.³² A significant consequence of the notion of white ethnicity is that it uses a racial logic to group “ethnicities” together under an umbrella of whiteness while also discounting the racial identity politics involved in that strategy. The formation of white ethnic identities served as a social construction that allowed certain Eastern and Southern European immigrants to become seen as white.

The Little Theatre Movement’s fascination with folk drama and performance practices provided a platform for immigrant populations to formulate the contours and politics of a white ethnic identity. The Little Theatre Movement was complicit in a racial project that legitimated and incorporated some cultures under a banner of whiteness. *The Drama Review*’s praise of performances at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House or by an auxiliary of the Irish Catholic parish perpetuated the tactics. The curatorial process of the Pittsburgh Drama League was always steeped in a sense of mission to purify the institution of theatre. The bulletins were the main instrument because they were seen as an independent review. Newspaper critics were

³² Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 25-50.

paid by theatres for their reviews. A publication by an independent critic, like Elmer Kenyon, would not be tainted by commercialism. But the association with the department store rooted *The Drama Review*'s existence in capitalism and materialism. There was a material reality, a particular world of amateur theatre, created by the Pittsburgh Drama League and its publication. That world was simultaneously segregated *and* inclusive. When theatre historians recount the history of the Little Theatre Movement and ignore the white racial politics embedded in the tactics of certain immigrant populations and strategies of social arbiters like the Pittsburgh Drama League, they risk replicating and repeating the narratives established by those that used amateur theatre to establish the social parameters and definitions of whiteness. The Little Theatre Movement and its history, shaped by publications like *The Drama Review*, should be considered as white racial projects.

In Lieu of Performance: Curation through Production Management in the Annual Amateur Play Competition

Nowhere was the Pittsburgh Drama League's influence in the amateur theatre scene more potent than in their annual amateur play competition. As discussed, by the time the Pittsburgh Center started to pursue ambitious aims in the community, many different little theatres, university players, and drama auxiliaries had emerged. By the 1920s, the Pittsburgh Drama League did not need to encourage the city to explore the potential of amateur performance. Nor did they need to stage their own performances or pageants. They did have one season in 1924 where the Pittsburgh Drama League Players staged a few nights of one-acts, but the organized efforts to write or direct

amateur performances were sporadic in the history of an organization that maintained a level of consistency in the activities they managed. In strong contrast to efforts to stage performances, the Pittsburgh Drama League demonstrated an abiding commitment to its annual effort to showcase the talents and range of amateur performers of other groups, both in the city and beyond. With very few exceptions, the Pittsburgh Center hosted a week long competition of one-acts every year from 1925 to 1942. Prizes were awarded and local newspapers reviewed some of the performances. It is difficult to gauge whether more people in Pittsburgh and in other parts of the country knew about the Pittsburgh Center because of *The Drama Review* or the annual amateur play competition. But both represented an effort to promote amateur theatre as a racially white institution and depended on the material support of Kaufmann's Big Store to reach its goals.

Gwen Tipton Thompson planned the original amateur play competition in 1925 and remained the head of the committee that oversaw the event until 1932. Tipton Thompson had a long career in the Pittsburgh Drama League, taking on a number of different roles and responsibilities throughout the time she was a member. Originally from Cincinnati, she moved to Pittsburgh after her husband, Lane Thompson, received a promotion in his company. Their son was a student of Elmer Kenyon at Sheneley High School. He introduced Kenyon to his mother and Kenyon quickly invited her to join the organization. Within short order, she served as both the financial secretary and the membership secretary for five years. Tipton Thompson proved invaluable. As the latter, she maintained the records of the center and ensured each member received their weekly copy of *The Drama Review*. She was determined

to make sure that members kept their dues up to date. As the financial secretary, she received praise from Kenyon in *The Drama Review*. He publicly extolled, "In these months of her incumbency, she has corrected errors and systematized our records with a patience and energy that deserve the gratitude of every member of the League."³³ After acting in a few pieces and directing some others, she became the chair of the play producing committee in October 1924. She wrote a letter to Kenyon expressing her inadequacy for the position but joked that she did feel more prepared for it than being a financial secretary. Tipton Thompson went on to teach oratory at the Pittsburgh School of Speech Arts and directed a large number of performances. She directed the Pittsburgh Center's radio dramas, productions put on by high schools, women's clubs, and boys' clubs throughout the city, and plays on the Chautauqua circuit. She even directed plays at a little theatre in Jamestown, New York. She later co-founded the South Hills Repertory Company in Cincinnati. But from 1924 to 1932, she worked to coordinate a competition that highlighted and celebrated the variety of amateur theatre in the city and surrounding areas.

Tipton Thompson made the competition open to little theatres, university players, high school troupes, and drama auxiliaries. The idea was that as long as the organization was not professional, they could compete. However, given that there was a longstanding practice of the Pittsburgh Drama League denying entry to African American performers, this idea of wide-reaching inclusion had its limits. Over the multiple years that the Center held the competition, numbers varied, but they tended

³³ Elmer Kenyon, "Straight Talk," *The Drama Review* 4, no. 9 (1924). Pittsburgh Drama League Archives, Unnumbered Box Labeled "Pittsburgh Drama League Reviews, 1922–1937," Folder: 1924–25. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

to hold the event over the course of three or four evenings and presented twelve to sixteen one-act plays. They held the competition towards the end of the theatrical season, generally in the third week of April. In a copy of *The Drama Review* in 1924, Tipton Thompson indicated that she got the idea from a similar amateur play competition that the Cincinnati Drama League organized. Comparable competitions developed around the same time in other producing centers in New York, Dallas, Tulsa, and London. Tipton Thompson wrote to Elmer Kenyon that she was excited about the idea because the event could give “another avenue of self-expression for those who can act, an enjoyable means of entertainment for other members and a perfectly legitimate advertisement of our activities and our existence to the outside world.”³⁴ More than an advertisement for other activities, the Annual Play Competition became a signature accomplishment of the group. Professional critics for the local newspapers participated as judges in certain years. Awards (both trophies and cash prizes) were given to best plays, actors, and eventually design models. By the fourth year, leaders in the Pittsburgh Center imagined that they could use their local competition as a way to select a winner to send to the New York amateur play contest.³⁵ Gwen Tipton Thompson and her husband left their mark on what became a beloved and anticipated activity.

Lane Thompson was interested in theatre stagecraft as a hobby. He especially enjoyed working on set and lighting designs. For the first seven years, the

³⁴ See Pittsburgh Drama League Archives. Box 2. Folder VI. Correspondence: Thompson, Mrs. Lane. Letter dated 01 October 1924. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

³⁵ Elmer Kenyon, “Attend the Amateur Players Contest,” *The Drama Review* 7, no 27 (1928). Pittsburgh Drama League Archives, Unnumbered Box Labeled “Pittsburgh Drama League Reviews, 1922–1937,” Folder: 1927-28. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

competition could happen because Thompson made the set. He had designed and built sets for other amateur productions staged by the Pittsburgh Drama Players. But when his wife organized the play competition, they worked together on different creative ends to design a successful tradition. Because registration and the deadline to submit plays tended to be in mid-February, they would have started reviewing applications for the eighth annual competition, but on February 7, 1932, Lane Thompson died of a cerebral hemorrhage. Gwen Tipton Thompson soon moved back to Cincinnati to be with family. James MacFarlane—one of the board members, an amateur playwright, and an eventual president of the Pittsburgh Center—took over the chairmanship of the play competition committee after she left. By 1933, the Pittsburgh Drama League had instituted the Lane Thompson Award, a prize that recognized accomplishment in amateur theatrical design.

For the first six years, Lane Thompson designed the sets for a space in the East Liberty Carnegie Library, but in his last year he worked in the Theresa Kaufmann Auditorium in the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House. The settlement house would be the venue from 1931 until the final competition in 1942. The move brought technological advancement. The new auditorium had light boards, a stage, and rehearsal spaces. But the relocation also represented a geographic shift. It moved the annual festivities from the east side of the city to a venue closer to downtown, which happened to be within walking distance of the Kaufmann's Big Store. The Irene Kaufmann Settlement House was located in the Hill District, an area of the city with a large and historic African American population. All but one of August Wilson's plays in his Pittsburgh cycle take place in the Hill District. Relocating the

competition to the settlement house there only made the segregationist practices of the Pittsburgh Center more glaring.

Despite receiving little to no mention in *The Drama Review*, African American amateur theatre was vibrant in Pittsburgh throughout the 1920s, particularly in the Hill District. African American professional organizations, political groups, and sports teams flourished in that area of the city. The Hill District offered a vibrant performing arts scene, both in terms of music and theatre. As mentioned, the Olympian Players represented one of five committed African American theatre companies that worked to put together the Pittsburgh Drama League. They organized in 1931 to generate more interest in the community in theatrical performance. Until they disbanded in 1936, the Negro Drama League sponsored their own workshops, lectures, classes, and annual play competitions to support the vitality and craft of an African American amateur theatre that had been small but active in Pittsburgh for more than fifteen years.

The Olympian Players' performance of *Breeders* at the 1936 play competition was celebrated beyond that night. A history commissioned by the Works Progress Administration regarding "the Negro in Pittsburgh" compiled in 1941 indicated that the Pittsburgh Center barred the Olympians in terms of affiliation and participation in the festival. But it goes on to praise the Olympians for breaking the color bar. That said, it only did so in terms of the festival. The Pittsburgh Center still chose not to affiliate with either the Olympians or the Negro Drama League in any official capacity.

The Pittsburgh Drama League remained resolved to not affiliate with any African American theatre companies. On May 11, 1941, the leadership and the board of directors for the Pittsburgh Center met for their monthly meeting. According to meeting minutes, they discussed a letter they received dated in April from Walter Worthington and Olive Fleming that requested the board list the Green Pastures Company as an affiliated company of the Pittsburgh Center. Worthington was an actor, playwright, and community activist who had left the Olympians to form his own company. The Green Pastures Community Theater was named after the successful Broadway production of the play *The Green Pastures*, a show with an all-black cast that had its first staging at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. Their 1941 season included productions of *Porgy and Bess*, *Mamba's Daughters*, and *Jubilee*. But before that season started, they contacted the Pittsburgh Center to seek their affiliation and support. The secretary of the Pittsburgh Drama League recorded the following:

A spirited discussion followed the reading of the letter, and the members seemed to be equally divided as to the advisability of accepting a colored group into League membership. A motion was made by Mr. Story, seconded by Mrs. Mantel, that the group be accepted as a group on a parity with the other group enrollments, and that one member of the organization be accorded voting privileges. Before a vote was taken, the suggestion was made by the Secretary that the difficulty inherent in any definite action could be circumvented by a tactfully-worded letter to the group to the effect that the League would gladly accept the Green Pastures Company into League membership upon proof that the group was to be a permanent one, and that its existence would be continuous and not temporary in character. A motion was then made by M. Seibel, seconded by Mrs. Ritchey, that the letter be tabled until such time as the group was permanently established. The motion to table was passed upon a vote taken.³⁶

³⁶ See Pittsburgh Drama League Archives. Box 1. Folder 1: Minutes of General Meetings, 22 October 1935 to 15 April 1945. Entry for 11 May 1941. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

By 1941, there were members of the Pittsburgh Center who were enthusiastic about the potential relationship. Chester Story had been a member of the organization for a long time and a president for a period. But obviously, they were in the minority and the Pittsburgh Center maintained its segregationist position.

It is the logic on which the decision turned that is revealing. The paramount principle became one of longevity. The secretary moved for delay based on the presumption that the African American company should prove its permanence or “that its existence would be continuous and not temporary.” Ignoring Worthington’s long commitment to the amateur theatre via the Olympian Players and his successful turn as a key role in *The Green Pastures* at the Playhouse, the Pittsburgh Drama League wanted the Green Pastures Company to demonstrate it could operate as a permanent establishment before any ties would be made. First, this illustrates the racialized privilege enjoyed by the Pittsburgh Drama League. Either the group could not see how withholding affiliation (and therefore advertisement in *The Drama Review*) would contribute to that process of permanently establishing the African American theatre or they knew that withholding resources would prevent its success. Given that meeting moved from a motion to accept the company, to a motion to write a letter setting up benchmarks, to ending with a motion to table the letter and discussion entirely might suggest the latter.

The Pittsburgh Center was not without its history of selective inclusion. In 1932, one of the entrants to the annual play competition was from a Chinese American playwright. Samuel Kwok Ying Fung wrote a new play called *Late Autumn*. Working with The Dracontra Players of Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, he

won second place. Samuel Kwok Ying Fung lived in the Strip District near Polish Hill. Through his life in Pittsburgh he published a few one-act plays, became a professor at Lingnan University and Duquesne University, and gave lectures as a member of the Drama League. More importantly, he was billed as a special correspondent to drama magazines on Chinese theatre. He was from Guangzho, a port city northwest of Hong Kong. The Pittsburgh Drama League seemed to welcome him with open arms. His work and interests practically fulfilled a goal Helen St. Peter expressed in *The Drama Review* prior to the sixth annual play competition. After they received submissions from groups in Ohio, West Virginia, and New York, St. Peter confessed, “we still have hopes of receiving an application from a group in Denmark or Siam.”³⁷ China was probably close enough. No doubt Samuel Kwok Ying Fung’s contributions were probably limited to his perspectives on a Chinese theatre and culture that was exoticized and Orientalized. The influence of American Orientalism in determining the shape of amateur theatre and the lives of Asian Americans reached beyond the residential gardens of Southern California. Still, it is evident that a space was carved out for Samuel Kwok Ying Fung, Irish folk stories, and Russian Jewish presentations, while such complicated spaces were not made for African American performers and little theatre companies.

The Pittsburgh Drama League’s creation and management of its annual play competition was a racialized act of curation. While amateur theatre certainly provided an opportunity to enact utopic performatives, the utopias staged were often imagined

³⁷ Helen St. Peter, “Sixth Amateur Players Contest,” *The Drama Review* 9, no 16. (1930). Pittsburgh Drama League Archives, Unnumbered Box Labeled “Pittsburgh Drama League Reviews, 1922–1937,” Folder: 1920-30. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

as white. They were not inclusive utopias for everyone. In the midst of the Great Migration, many African Americans moved to Pittsburgh. The Drama League fostered and curated performatives of assimilation for immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe; they did not extend their vision of community to include migrants from the American South. The Center set up boundaries that segregated amateur theatre, preventing the participation of African American artists. But the curatorial process that selected to present folk cultures of immigrant communities was a means by which whiteness was forged. Performances at the East Liberty Carnegie Library and the Irene Kaufmann Settlement house enacted racialized utopic performances that imagined and enacted the assimilation of selected migrant populations. White ethnic identities, which operated as white racial identities, could be seen as the Pittsburgh Drama League put them on stage.

A Theatrical Cultural Exhibit: Kaufmann's Big Store as a Site for Organizing Material Objects

After the national body of the Drama League of America disbanded in 1931, individual chapters were on their own to pursue their agendas or plans. Most, like Pasadena's Center, either disbanded entirely or reorganized with a new name and function. Pittsburgh was a rare exception. If anything, the dissolution of the national body provided more vigor to the local chapter to lead the charge in supporting amateur performance, little theatres, theatre education in secondary and higher education, and a national culture that supported theatre as a significant social institution. In 1932, the Pittsburgh Drama League worked with the drama department

at the Carnegie Institute to host a one day Drama Institute. The day consisted of lectures about how to teach practical skills in theatre in college programs, workshops for writing new plays, and keynote speeches by designers in professional theatre or prominent college professors. The Drama Institute occurred for four years, every November from 1932 to 1935. It was, in all respects, a condensed version of the national conference the Drama League of America held each year, which is not surprising given that Helen St. Peter, the chairwoman that organized the Institute, was almost always the representative for Pittsburgh at the annual Drama League conferences. During the 1930s, Helen St. Peter planned many activities through the Pittsburgh Drama League. She was an active member throughout the 1920s, but with the departure of Elmer Kenyon and the Thompsons, her name became attached to many more of the endeavors of the organization. Perhaps the most interesting project she took on that further tied the Pittsburgh Center and Kaufmann's department store together was a week-long theatrical cultural exhibit in April 1933.

The cultural exhibit was held for four days on the eleventh floor of the department store. Helen St. Peter worked to put together a series of demonstrations, theatre ephemera, volumes of scripts, and multiple displays. In addition to a restaurant, the eleventh floor was designed with an auditorium and an art gallery, so it was a perfect venue. Edgar Kaufmann was not only interested in promoting the arts throughout the city, but particularly in promoting the Big Store itself as a cultural hub for art. In the 1920s, he commissioned a redesign of the first floor and gallery of the store in an art-deco style. Then he paid the painter Boardman Robinson to create a ten-part canvas mural series depicting the history of commerce. They decorated the

walls of the first floor and showed capitalism at different stages of development and in various civilizations throughout the world. Edgar Kaufmann orchestrated an entire event around their unveiling in 1930. Speeches were given by the mayor, William Doak (the then-US Secretary of Labor), and himself. A year later, in 1931, the Pittsburgh Drama League held a competition for students in high school to write 15 minute plays based on the murals. The only stipulation was that the scene had to begin with the characters in the configuration depicted in one of the paintings and proceed from there. Groups staged their scenes in the auditorium and the store sponsored prizes for the winners of the writing and presentation competitions.³⁸ By 1933, Helen St. Peter had extended the working relationship with Kaufmann's initiated by Kenyon and could make a strong case for why the eleventh floor would be a great space for a cultural exhibit designed around theatre.

The cultural exhibit initially came out of an attempt to procure and showcase a traveling collection of theatre ephemera that belonged to the English actor and producer Richard Mansfield. Mansfield was famous during the nineteenth century for his portrayal of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, but he had a long career in theatre. By the 1930s, his widow, Beatrice Cameron Mansfield, who was herself an actress, was making money loaning out different materials that he had accumulated throughout his career. But after Helen St. Peter procured the collection, she sought more items to make an entire exhibit about theatre rather than just Mansfield. The Nixon Theatre of Pittsburgh offered some of their belongings, like costumes, props, and photographs.

³⁸ Pittsburgh Drama League Archives. Box 2, Folder VI. B. (34) Correspondence: Kaufmann's. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh. For articles and discussion about the murals and their unveiling, see unnumbered Box labeled Drama League Clippings. Folder 1930.

Esser Brothers, a theatrical supply company, also lent out some of their costumes, apparently including battle armor. Local colleges presented design renderings produced by their students. One of the members of the Pittsburgh Center, Dr. George Baird, was the executive of the city's art commission, a playwright, and the owner of an extensive library of scripts. He brought samples of his library that contained over 1500 plays. Furthermore, Helen St. Peter scheduled the exhibit so it would coincide with the annual play competition. That year they invited participants to submit models for the sets they would design for their productions if they had more resources. The winner would become the recipient of the inaugural Lane Thompson Memorial Prize for Theatrical Design. But it also meant that their work would be visible throughout the week in Kaufmann's.

From Tuesday to Friday, the exhibit was opened the entire day during Kaufmann's operating hours. It was opened to the public, free of charge. And there was a lecture each afternoon at 3 PM. On Tuesday, Carl Cass of the University of Pittsburgh demonstrated how to apply and use stage make-up. Wednesday brought Alice McGirr of the Central Carnegie Library who discussed how to choose a play to read or stage. Dr. Baird addressed how to write a play on Thursday. And the week ended with Jean Gros showing the puppets he planned on taking to Chicago for a display and presentation at the upcoming World's Fair. Gros's contribution to the cultural exhibit required interacting with inanimate objects and materials that were racialized.

Jean Gros was a local puppeteer. The materials he created were based around the popular Popeye character. By the time of the cultural exhibit, the Popeye puppet

was not quite completed. However, he did have the supporting characters and set prepared. The story for the Popeye show was that the titular hero got marooned on an island of primitive cannibals. A photograph of the display appeared in the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* and indicates the presence of seven black puppets, all about eighteen to twenty-four inches tall. Six of the puppets are male, wearing loin cloths and sporting spears. Though, one also appears to be wearing a crown. Positioned in the center of the stage and the picture is the one female puppet, wearing a long grass skirt but whose chest is bare. The posture of the puppet is quite contorted and curved so that the breasts and butt are pronounced. In the photograph, all of the puppets have very white eyes, echoing a minstrelized representation of black bodies. But the focus of the eyes for each of the male puppets is varied. Most are just facing out towards the audience, one in the direction of the Popeye puppet. But the female puppet's focus is fixated on Gros, the puppeteer. Her face is directed out toward the audience, but her vision is directed up and to her right where Gros stands as he holds Popeye and the cannibal king.

Gros's puppets illustrate the presence and pervasive influence of a racialized culture of segregation that committed representational violence against black bodies. That violence could be gendered and operated on a paradigm of making black women sexualized objects. Centralizing the female puppet's body in the *mise en scene*, exaggerating its sexualized anatomical features, and directing its gaze towards her white puppeteer/creator reflects long traditions of trauma localized at the intersection of black, female identity. It is a moment that demonstrates the type of material culture that existed in the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century which Robin Bernstein

examines in *Racial Innocence*. The objects in the picture elicited scripted behaviors from the individuals that came in contact with them. As she argues, when audience members responded to those interpolations and entered into a dance with those objects, the racialized nature of those objects produced and reinscribed racialized ideologies and identities. It is not difficult to see how leaders of the organization that would invite Gros and his primitivized, cannibalistic black puppets to the exhibit could also deny the participation of the Olympians or tell a theatre company that they needed to demonstrate a commitment to permanence. But while Gros's puppets are clearly material objects that are themselves racialized and play a role in perpetuating a racist racial project, I would argue that the cultural exhibit, under the auspices of the Pittsburgh center *and* Kaufmann's department store, was itself a racial project that contributed to the social and cultural formation of white racial identities.

Like any of the other floors at Kaufmann's, the Pittsburgh Drama League's theatrical cultural exhibit was a collection and arrangement of materials. That arrangement drew on various other institutions throughout the city to add onto the ephemera collected from one British actor's estate. Just as in the pages of *The Drama Review* and on the stages of the annual play competition, that curation ignored and negated the presence and contribution of African American artists. In addition to including the puppets, the exclusion of other voices formed a particular racialized narrative about the institution of theatre. When department stores created displays, they staged new worlds, facilitating their existence. The world imagined by the Pittsburgh Drama League's exhibit was one in which theatre was a foundational cultural institution. The gathering of the materials and arrangement of the artifacts

acted as a utopian performative that brought that imagined world some measure of reality. This is similar to the Drama League of America's efforts to promote a Drama Week once a year where all other institutions throughout a community—like schools, women's clubs, government services—were invited and encouraged to address how theatre could benefit them. But the utopia of an institutional theatre staged in the exhibit was racially white. The Pittsburgh Drama League's other efforts to include immigrant populations into their activities while excluding African Americans reflected a process of seeing more European groups as white ethnics. Coordinating and curating the exhibit, extended this ideology. The only theatre world that existed for the Pittsburgh Drama League—be it amateur or professional—was one composed entirely of white artists and audience members.

Coda: A Change in Management

Edgar Kaufmann sold the Kaufmann's chain to the May Company of department stores in 1946. The May Company did not retain the commitment and dedication to building up the arts in Pittsburgh that drove the philanthropy of the various members of the Kaufmann family. The Big Store stayed opened and it remained a vital force in downtown life, but cultural events were not centralized there as they had been throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Groups like the Pittsburgh Drama League that depended on the patronage of Kaufmann's faced challenges in the transition. However, by 1946, the Pittsburgh Center had been undergoing its own reorganizations. After 1935, there were no more institutes planned. People were no longer traveling to Pittsburgh to learn how to make amateur theatre in their own

cities, towns, or schools. After fifteen annual play competitions, the festival ended in 1942. And in 1946, the new Kaufmann's store suspended publication of *The Drama Review*. The Pittsburgh Drama League, much like Kaufmann's department store, continued operating for decades to follow. However, the force it played in the life of the community was altered and noticeably diminished.

The story of the Pittsburgh Drama League is one of curation and duration. Duration was not only significant because of their decade long perseverance, but because it was part of their standard for curation. When duration (or perceived lack thereof) was used as a logic or rhetoric to justify the exclusion of the Green Pasture theatre from affiliation, it revealed the power dynamics that characterized the activities of the Pittsburgh Drama League. Over the years, segregating a city with a large and growing African American population and embracing a new immigrant populations was accomplished culturally and materially (among other places) in the space of amateur theatre. Whiteness was exerted through a narrative of curatorial power and privilege. It is not that black amateur theatre did not exist or lacked vibrancy in Pittsburgh, but rather that the Pittsburgh Drama League did not report on it, invite it to the annual stage, or include it in the cultural exhibit. This not only reflected an effort to segregate and negate black racial identities from theatre and cultural conversations, but also reflected a concerted effort to include new immigrant populations into the umbrella of whiteness. When David Roediger discusses how immigrant populations from Eastern and Southern Europe moved from a space "between whiteness" and into "whiteness," he argues that it is because there was an establishment of white ethnic identities connected to countries of origin. The

Pittsburgh Drama League curated that paradigm and staged such identities. They made them seeable and knowable. The amateur theatre they supported, praised, encouraged, and valued was both a white institution and one which incorporated certain immigrants into white ethnic identities.

The department stores themselves were a performative curation of the possible worlds that men and women could create. They exercised strategies to entice desire and to stage utopias. Department stores contributed to the formation of a culture of children that was distinct from an adult space. They propagated a philosophy surrounding service-based industries. Department stores, like theatre, organized and reorganized material things to present possibilities and shape realities. They were also the spaces where racialized objects that perpetuated a culture of segregation could be purchased. The Pittsburgh Drama League would not have been able to do anything if it were not for the assistance and support of the Kaufmann Department Store and it is not surprising that the Pittsburgh Drama League engaged in a culture of segregation that the store helped sell. It is important to consider how each enacted this culture. The materials were present. They could have constructed the world in one way, but they constructed it in another. Through print, festivals, and exhibitions, the Pittsburgh Drama League perpetually constructed a utopia that removed blackness from cultural imagination and categorized immigrants as white ethnics.

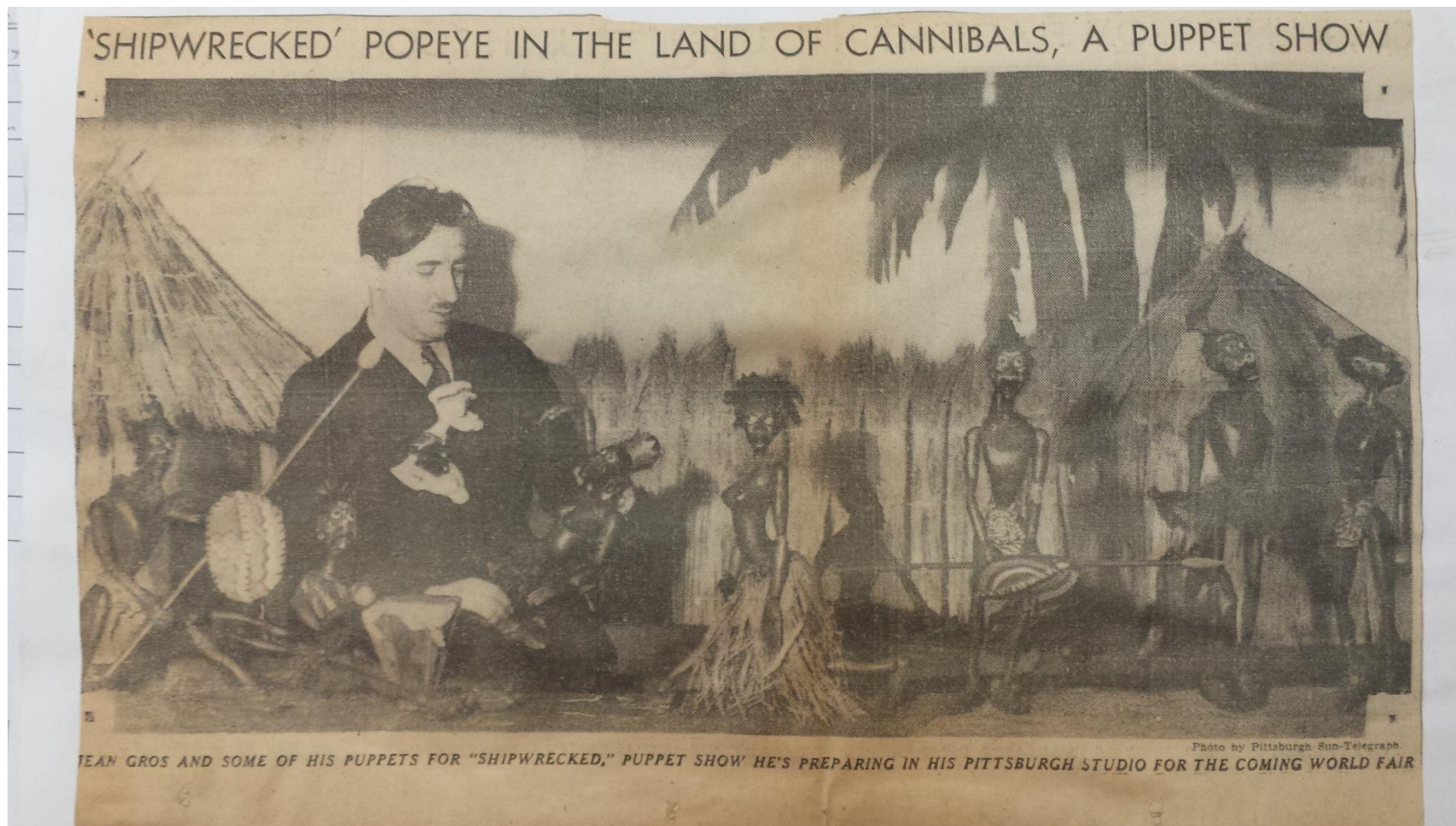


Figure 21. Jean Gros and His Problematic Puppets. "Shipwrecked' Popeye in the Land of Cannibals, a Puppet Show," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. Photograph included as a clipping collected in the archives of the Pittsburgh Drama League. Pittsburgh Drama League Archives. Box labeled Drama League Clippings. Folder 1930. Curtis Theatre Collection. Hillman Library. University of Pittsburgh.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

One of my favorite plays to teach is María Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends*. While written and produced in 1977, the script indicates that it is set in New England in the spring of 1935. Eight women gather in the home of Fefu to prepare a presentation on education reform. The play journeys into surreal realms as the women characterize their relationships (or lack thereof) with each other, with some men in their lives, and with their own isolation in a patriarchal system. Questions emerge about mysterious injuries Fefu's friend Julia suffered one day on a hunting trip, Fefu's game with her husband where she shoots at him with blanks and he pretends to die, and malevolent apparitions that haunt the dreams of Fefu, Julia, and another friend, Cindy. What tethers the women together as a group and the action of the play to a sense of reality is their united purpose to meet as an organizing committee dedicated to addressing problems in an education program. This purpose takes shape in the third act when the women come together to rehearse their presentation. Embedded within their address is exactly the type of amateur theatrical performance that Hazel MacKaye and Glenna Smith Tinnin would have staged.

The character Emma becomes a main force pushing for some theatricality in their efforts. In the first act, when one woman expresses that she did not know they would be doing theatre, Emma responds: "Life is theatre. Theatre is life. If we're showing what life is, can be, we must do theatre." Emma proceeds to quote a sonnet from Shakespeare during the second act, solidifying her theatrical credentials. In the third act, as the women move through the order they will go in during the

presentation, the script calls for Emma to walk to the center of the room. Fornes describes the costume Emma has put on, “She wears a robe which hangs from her arms to the floor.” Fornes dresses Emma as a personified virtue much like MacKaye and Smith Tinnin did for the women in *Allegory*. Emma proceeds to launch into a dramatic recitation of “The Science of Educational Dramatics” by Emma Sheridan Fry. Throughout it, she refers to Environment, explaining society and school have attempted to restrict a natural or “Divine Urge” to learn, experience sensation, and contribute to creation. But Environment cannot be deterred. In exultation, Emma builds to a defiant declaration where she proclaims, “The task of Now is only a step toward the task of the Whole! Let us then seek the laws governing real life forces, that coming into their own, they make, develop, and reconstruct.” Through a riveting performance meant to echo the amateur theatre of the early twentieth century, Emma introduces hope to the other women and the action of the play. Her performance is bookended by expressions by Julia. Julia starts the act expressing her resignation, confessing it is easier for her to be institutionalized and surrounded by other “nuts” who have hallucinations like herself. By the end, when Emma concludes her performance announcing, “Oh, it’s so beautiful,” Julia is the first to confirm: “It is, Emma. It is.”

Depending on how a performance of *Fefu and Her Friends* is staged or costumed, there is perhaps little in the script that situates the action of the play in the spring of 1935 more than suggesting that a women’s group interested in social reform would decide to stage an amateur theatrical performance. Unless you consider the shape that performance takes. Emma gives a dramatic recitation about the triumph of

a universal nature while dressed in a tunic. It is inspiring and dramaturgically works to bring in the life and energy that Emma promises theatre can do. In the plot of the play, Emma's amateur theatrical, even in "rehearsal," enacts a utopian performative, showing not only what life is, but what it can be.

As I reflect on the play, it is striking that Fornés provides little on the racial identities of the characters. Certainly, historical circumstances surrounding what character backgrounds are hinted at would let one presume that most of the women in the group would identify as white. For the exception of Paula who mentions she grew up in the working class, almost all of the women are from decidedly middle-class families. They appear to know each other from college. And they are involved in an organization dedicated to education reform. If set in a city like Pittsburgh, that had an established African American middle class in the 1930s, it is entirely possible the characters could be black. But, assuming the play took an approach that assumed fidelity to historical circumstances, the specifics of setting the play in New England increases the likelihood that the characters are meant to be read as white or that they belonged to an ethnic group that during the 1930s was becoming white.¹ What role has race played in the production history of *Fefu and Her Friends*? What role should it play in future productions?

No matter how a production of *Fefu and Her Friends* decided to address race in its casting choices, it is clear that the play illustrates how amateur theatre operated as a gendered space for women to participate in the public sphere and use established

¹ It should be noted the play rarely demonstrates fidelity to historical accuracy. At one point, the script calls for the women to sing "Cecilia" to the character Cecilia. Assuming Fornés is referring to the 1970 Simon and Garfunkel song that would have been a little anachronistic for the 1935 setting.

gender norms to articulate a hope in reform. Having focused on the local histories of racial dynamics in Washington, D.C., Pasadena, and Pittsburgh, I have to confess that I am curious how immigration and migration of people impacted race in New England. Many of Hazel MacKaye's pageants were staged in Massachusetts and Connecticut. What shape did whiteness take in those locations? How did women articulate whiteness in areas beyond those represented in my research as it stands?

While whiteness was impacted by national and international events, it was defined in its locality. As David Roediger has argued, whiteness is not experienced in the totality of a system of law, but in everyday exchanges and interactions between people. Critiquing Matthew Frye Jacobson's narrative that whiteness and racial transformation was attained by European immigrants through legal or intellectual frameworks alone, Roediger contends that the social process of whitening included "quotidian activities." He explains,

To summarize the triumph of the myth of a common "Caucasian-ness" in those venues represents a formidable task but avoids the welter of further problems raised when we think of whitening as a process in social history in which countless quotidian activities informed popular and expert understandings of the race of new immigrants, as well as new immigrant understandings of race. Those problems introduce the messiness to the plot of how new immigrants became fully white.²

The messiness of the process requires an emphasis on local histories to examine how larger patterns or forces unfolded. Amateur theatre was an important space to consider representations and interactions because theatre is a medium so tightly connected to the geographic location or municipality where it is performed. It reflects

² David Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White, The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 8.

and is deeply tied to the local histories of cities and towns. Moreover, amateur theatre represents a key site to examine the process of racial transformation because it was both a space where the quotidian activities occurred and a means by which popular understandings of race were staged and articulated.

Complicating Roediger's emphasis on masculinized spaces to generate his analysis of working-class whiteness, I have argued that amateur theatre in the early twentieth century was a femininely gendered space that significantly contributed to popular understandings of whiteness. The fact that many women participated in the creation of amateur theatre and that the space itself was gendered in relationship to professional theatre shaped how whiteness was formed there. Roediger's description of whiteness as a working-class identity stemmed from an analysis of the highly masculinized jobs in factories that most male European immigrants sought as they arrived. The gendering of that whiteness is important to consider, but it is also important to analyze how white femininity functioned. I have argued that because of existing gender norms that defined femininity at the turn of the twentieth century, representations of racial identity and whiteness were generally staged as "hopeful." Such white hope depended on envisioning racial tensions and ethnic diversity as surmountable problems that could be solved for the future of the nation. The tenor and tone of that "white hope" entirely depended on the rise of expedient feminism that depended on a strategic essentialism, justifying women's participation in the public sphere based on their presumed natural inclination to virtues like hope. The dimensions of whiteness that women could articulate in the public sphere was

informed by their gender and the shape of feminist political rhetoric at the turn of the twentieth century.

The utopia performatives in amateur theatre depended on women bringing together racialized material objects to stage the stories that they told. Recycling and reorganizing those objects allowed them to repeat the narratives, images, and ideologies they circulated about what white femininity was. White femininity was connected to universal virtues necessary for democracy. White femininity provided the moral strength and aptitude to save people throughout the world. White femininity had authoritative knowledge on foreign cultures in East Asia and the rest of the Orient. White femininity possessed the capacity to curate new possibilities and experiences through material culture brought into the home via department stores. Whiteness was forged in gendered spaces like amateur theatre as well as twentieth-century factories. The dynamics of white hope were as connected to social relationships of power and racialized material consequences as the dynamics of white rage. They were forged in different sites but are important to consider in tandem to understand the variety of ways that whiteness has been shaped historically and how its power continues to operate in the United States in the twenty-first century.

Organizing White Femininity through Amateur Theatre has sought to emphasize the specific local histories of Washington, D.C., Pasadena, and Pittsburgh to illustrate the various permutations in which whiteness could be articulated. That effort came out of a desire to expand the history of the Drama League of America. Existing histories of the organization have focused on Chicago and New York City. Those cities had large rates of activity in professional theatre. That activity informed

what the chapters of the Drama League did in those cities. For example, such professional activity was the reason why the national headquarters were in those cities. The histories of the Drama League have been impacted by those dynamics. Washington, D.C., Pasadena, and Pittsburgh each had fairly different professional theatre scenes at the turn of the twentieth century. The presence of the professional theatre community impacted the shape of the amateur theatre that developed. But at the end of the day, it is also true that each city I investigated did have enough professional activity to be considered a “producing center” by the national organization. Chapters of the Drama League that did not exist in cities with professional theatre were simply referred to as chapters. What did amateur theatre organized by a Drama League chapter look like in towns and cities that were not designated producing centers? What types of performances did they stage? How did immigration and migration impact those areas and the performances they staged? While attempting to expand a history of amateur theatre beyond sites like Chicago and New York, it has kept close to large metropolitan areas that attracted new immigrant arrivals. What happened in locations where amateur theatre had no professional theatre to articulate itself against? What activities were planned by the Drama League chapters that were spread throughout the Midwest, Great Plains, Intermountain West, and American South? What did those chapters do throughout the year? What did they read? Did they stage performances? How did those performances reflect efforts to respond to changing circumstances, including the influx of immigration and migration of large groups of people?

Beyond the producing centers or the more isolated chapters throughout the United States, the Drama League had a presence in communities beyond national borders. Everything started in Evanston, Illinois, but sister organizations quickly formed in other English-speaking countries, including Canada, Ireland, England, and Australia. Some histories (primarily in the form of theses or dissertations) have been written on the history of the Drama League of Ireland or the Drama League of Australia. While I conducted research at the Huntington Library, I came across a few random materials printed by the Drama League of Britain. How might a study of amateur theatre across national borders impact a history of amateur performance? This project has sought to identify the formation of whiteness in the specificity of the local histories of two American cities and a suburb. Forces and events, both national and international, impacted those histories. But how might a study of amateur theatre across national borders impact a history of amateur performance *and* the role it played in establishing racial or gendered identities? Was there a history Canadian Orientalism? How did the Drama League of Australia represent Aboriginal Australians or Pacific Island peoples? What degree of contact or collaboration did the national organizations have with each other? Was amateur theatre gendered in those countries to the degree that it was in the United States?

Again, the key to these social processes is the emphasis on locality. But in addition to the primacy of local history in studying the racial formation of whiteness, locality is very important when considering a history of amateur theatre. Certainly, a similar statement could be said for the analysis of professional theatre. The same play produced in New York City and Pasadena are different events with different contexts.

But amateur performances are different from professional productions because in the former, a community is often performing directly to itself. The performers in amateur theatre have a different relationship to the audience, the costumes, the properties, and the spaces than performers in professional theatre do. The fields of theatre and performances studies are just beginning to theorize and analyze the distinctions in those relationships. Michael Dobson's *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance*, for example, turns the pejorative framing of amateur theatre as a space for derivative copies of professional theatre on its head. In his cultural history, he argues, in part, that textual interpretations and staging conventions that began in amateur performances among Shakespeare societies in England eventually became represented in professional productions.³ I have argued that amateur theatre is significant to study because of the role it played in racial formation; however, this project has revealed how amateur theatre has a different relationship to the essential components of theatre that are either generally taken for granted or studied differently in the frame of professional theatre. Properties, costumes, and play scripts operate as material objects in amateur theatre in ways that they do not in professional theatre. In the case of Pasadena, for example, amateur theatre allowed women to bring distinct items that decorated their homes into a fully realized *mise en scène*. The actions of organizing those materials and performing American Orientalism themselves constituted a different relationship to those items than the women had before. It was different than what experience they would have had if they simply saw similar items

³ Michael Dobson, *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

in a professional production of *Madame Butterfly* or *The Mikado*. And it was different than the relationship that professional performers had with similar items. Amateur theatre is categorically distinct from professional theatre and more work is needed to analyze its various histories and when it has been a space or means for various social processes.

For this reason, it is important to point out that one of the limitations of this project is its focus on the Drama League of America as representative of amateur theatre. It is not earth-shattering to acknowledge that amateur theatre and amateur performances were created by other organizations beyond the Drama League. Karen Blair's history on amateur arts associations shows the wide variety of groups and auxiliaries that had interest in amateur performance. I began an early iteration of this project by studying the American Pageant Association, an organization that was dedicated to supporting the work of civic pageantry throughout the United States. They only existed for about six years between 1910 and 1916, but they documented various pageants that were staged throughout the United States and they promoted the names of significant pageant directors. Many of the pageant writers and directors were women. Some involved in the American Pageant Association were part of a growing group of educators finding jobs teaching practical theatre skills in institutions of higher education. As indicated in the chapter on Pasadena, before the Pasadena Center emerged on the scene, the Shakespeare Society played a large role in organizing amateur performances. And activity in Pittsburgh clearly shows the wide range of institutions outside of the Drama League of America interested in supporting amateur theatre at the turn of the twentieth century.

A focus on centers of the Drama League provided direction for this project's methodology. As evidenced by the chapters, the local circumstances and personnel involved in each location did much to shape three very different organizations. Each producing center focused on activities that never materialized in the other spaces despite their shared connection to the national organization. That said, they did all stem from an organization that had at its roots a spirit and mission of reform. That mission changed at the national level over the years, shifting from a focus of reforming professional theatre to supporting a noncommercial or amateur theatre that would be the means of social and community reform. That ideology provoked the creation of suffragette pageants, garden plays, and annual competitions. It inspired the formation of relationships with social institutions like settlement houses, churches and synagogues, and department stores. The specifics may have varied from city to city, but an emphasis on reform remained key.

Expanding a definition of amateur theatre beyond the activities and goals of the Drama League of America will reveal other functional dimensions of amateur theatre. If reformation was not the purpose of an amateur performance staged by a group's drama auxiliary, what was? How did that inform the choices that they made in selecting plays to produce? Or locations at which to perform? For groups that were not driven by the vision of "reformance," did amateur performances still impact the formation of racial or gendered identities? If they did, how did that process unfold? Michael Dobson's selection of Shakespeare societies, for example, did not seem to have the same civic-oriented mission of the Drama League of America. How might expanding the definition of amateur theatre beyond the Drama League of America

indicate different gendered dynamics to the institution? What else might be revealed about the formation of whiteness or other racial identities?

Organizing White Femininity through Amateur Theatre has sought to uncover the contributions of women to a messy and complicated social process. It has sought to restore and analyze the efforts of women like Glenna Smith Tinnin, Adele Steiner Burleson, Eleanor Bissell, Gwen Tipton Thompson, and Helen St. Peter. Moreover, I have tried to critically engage with how gender influenced the performances they staged. Women played an active role in shaping how whiteness came to be understood at the turn of the twentieth century. But their gender impacted where and how they could articulate what whiteness meant, who was included in that identity, and how it operated. In the twenty-first century, with the rise and legitimization of white nationalism in the United States, white identity politics have been deployed to incite what Carol Anderson has called white rage. Such identity politics and the sense of rage has often been attributed to the “aggrieved, white working class,” a group often characterized as predominately male or in masculine terms. The election of 2016 revealed the necessity of complicating gendered assumptions or oversights about whiteness. White femininity has had a history forged in a variety of institutions, including children’s theatres, the creation and maintenance of gardens, and department stores. These institutions were not only connected to the history and operation of amateur theatre, but also the formation of a particular sensibility of whiteness. White hope, like white rage, continues to be an effective force and paradigm in the operation of white identity politics. Recognizing its roots at the intersection of race and gender is important. Doing so is necessary for devising

methods to address and dismantle white hope's contributions to systems and ideologies that privilege whiteness. Until that is done, white hope will continue to work in tandem with white rage to organize material benefits in favor of those that have access to a white identity. White hope will be used as a means to control cultural representations of whiteness and other racial identities. White hope might operate in amateur and professional theatrical venues, generating racialized utopian performatives and reifying the socioeconomic power of whiteness. In the future, as it did in the past, white hope could organize material objects in theatrical spaces, showing not only racialized life as it is, but as it can (always) be.

Appendix



Post by Jacob Haws posted on Facebook on November 14, 2016. Screenshot taken on November 15, 2016 by Allan Davis.

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