

“A Shplit Ticket, Half Irish, Half Chinay”: Representations of Mixed-Race and Hybridity In Turn-of-the-Century Theater

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Introduction¹

Charles Townsend's 1889 adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* features white actors playing light- and dark-skinned African-American characters, changing degrees of make-up as the script, stage business, or number of available players demands. Thomas Denison's stage directions to his 1895 play, *Patsy O'Wang*, an Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up, stipulates that the alternation of the half-Chinese, half-Irish cook between his two ethnic personas is "key to this capital farce," and that a comedic use of the Chinese dialect is central to this. *The Geezer* (c. 1896), Joseph Herbert's spoof of the popular musical, *The Geisha*, features white actors playing Chinese dignitaries, but also donning German and Irish accents. The white actors in these plays enact different paradigms of hybridity. The actors in Townsend's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a Melodrama in Five Acts embody conceptions of both mixed and unmixed African Americans, freely alternating between each. In *Patsy O'Wang*, the main character's background is central to the story, and the lead actor moves between the two ethnicities by his accent, mannerisms, and politics. Racial mixing is central to the plot of *The Geezer* through Anglo actors who make themselves hybrid by appearing Chinese and appropriating a third accent, rather than the creation of racially mixed offspring.

¹ I want to thank Shelley Fisher Fishkin, whose seminar, "At Century's End," served as the impetus for this paper. Besides, this opportunity to engage with turn-of-the-century primary sources at the University of Texas' Harry Ransom Center, she provided the encouragement to pursue this line of research.

The goal of this paper is to connect these three, late nineteenth-century plays, uncovering how depictions of racial mixing worked to bolster the status of free, white males. In particular, this paper asserts that the use of humor defined racially mixed people (as well as their parent racial groups) as worthy of mockery went beyond mere jest and towards the ends of deprivation, whether of employment opportunities, voting rights, or freedom to intermarry. There was more to lose from these plays than mere self-esteem, just as there was more to gain from writing, acting, or watching these plays than mere entertainment. What makes the potency of this humor possible is the versatility of white actors, writers, and audiences. By versatility, I mean the ability to move between racial and ethnic identities, mainly through changes in make-up, costume, mannerism, and speech. This versatility was a result of the racial segregation of the time, since theater groups were all-white. But it also relied on the stereotypes of ethnic groups. Along with the playwrights, the performances pulled from a well of conceptions about different peoples. In regards to race mixing, they also pulled from essentialist beliefs about the transmission of character that the homogeneous audiences could appreciate. Building on Ross Chambers's exploration of how whiteness appears to be un-marked while other racial groups appear to be marked in opposition to whiteness, I pose that actors of this time marked themselves as mixed through their performances. His essay, "The Unexamined," presents a list of social categories that are "unmarked," or free of "deviation, secondariness, and examinability," and considers whiteness the primary of such unburdened categories. He continues,

Like other unmarked categories, it has a touchstone quality of the normal, against which the members of marked categories are measured and, of course, found deviant, that is, wanting... Whiteness is not itself compared with anything, but other things are compared unfavorably with it, and their own comparability with one another derives from their distance from the touchstone. (Chambers 189)

In a way, the white actors of in these three plays considered themselves blank tablets, on which they wrote the signs of racial identity. They mixed whiteness with blackness and Asian-ness, but they also contributed to formulating those racial groups—as well as immigrant white groups—in relation to American whiteness in general.²

² While Chambers is speaking of contemporary racial identity, his analysis is helpful in starting to examine the racial order of the late 1800s as well. I wish to avoid the weaknesses of whiteness studies, namely defining "whiteness" too broadly or treating race as a "ubiquitous and unchanging transhistorical force rather than a shifting and contingent 'construction'," as Peter Kolchin warns. Instead, I refer to this set of writings for its attention to an often-overlooked racial identity that many have strived towards throughout United States history. I also thank Neil Foley and John Hartigan, whose writings remind us that there is more than one kind or whiteness at any given time, and that historical and contextual grounding is key to racial analysis. Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, American Crossroads; 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), John Hartigan, *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89.1 (2002).

What follows is an exploration of the history of stage representations of mixed-race, as well as analyses of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Patsy O'Wang*, and *The Geezer* in relation to mixed-race and hybridity. At first consideration, what joins these turn-of-the-century plays is the complex notion of white actors becoming hybrid. However, what resonates is that these transformations are aggressive maneuvers, exercises of white versatility and license, directed at racial and ethnic others. They echo blackface performances of the earlier part of the nineteenth century and foreshadow future representations of mixed-race throughout the twentieth century.

Representations of Mixed-Race

Representations of mixed-race in literature hail all the way back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, with the intrigue that followed the birth of a dark child to fair parents. In the New World context, whether in the English, Spanish, or Portuguese colonies, a hierarchy of color emerged, favoring those with a greater degree of white heritage. These colonies also invoked biblical justifications for slavery, which was central to their hierarchy. In the United States, the taboo of intimacy with racial others and the "curse of Ham" combined with scientific thought to suggest that offspring of black-and-white unions were illicit, immoral, and unnatural. By the mid-nineteenth century, the racial order in the United States, whether the North or the South, placed whites above blacks and mulattoes, and conferred upon the latter a middling, confused, and doomed situation.³

American literature regarding racial mixture reflected social and scientific thought regarding the topic, and the most prevalent mixed-race character was the Tragic Mulatto, who, according to Freda Giles,

served as a readily identifiable symbol of racial conflict, alienation, and insurmountable struggle against an untenable position in American society... The mulatto could be identified with and pitied as the victim of the miscegenation taboo while at the same time be feared as the despised other lurking within who had to be punished, either for trying to sneak into the white world as an imposter or for reminding the black world of the mark of the oppressor. (Giles 63-64)

³ For further reading on the history of racial categories, see Clara E. Rodriguez's *Changing Race*. Werner Sollors's *Neither Black nor White yet Both* provides an in-depth exploration of interracial themes in literature. *The Leopard's Spots*, by William Ragan Stanton, traces the establishment of American thought on the position of racially mixed people. Joel Williamson's *New People* gives a history of mulattos' social position from colonial times. Clara E. Rodriguez, *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States*, *Critical America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1980), Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), William Ragan Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* ([Chicago]: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

The Tragic Mulatto's catastrophic flaw is not character, ambition, or naiveté, but blood, an expression of nineteenth century ideas about racial hierarchy, the essentialist inheritance of inferiority, and the threat to society that results from miscegenation.⁴

In his 1933 essay, "The Negro Character as Seen by White Authors," poet Sterling Brown points out the racism in several popular representations of African-Americans in literature. In addition to the Contented Slave, the Wretched Freeman, the Comic Negro, the Brute Negro, the Local Color Negro, and the Exotic Primitive, Brown addresses the stereotype of the Tragic Mulatto, which had become popular with both black and white writers. Besides being a melodramatic abstraction that distracted readers and viewers from a history of sexual exploitation, the Tragic Mulatto stereotype also played out along distinct gender lines. Females were often winsome, beautiful, and lovelorn, while males were often aggressive, physical, and rebellious, a result of their nobler, white blood. Where untenable love often led to the females' downfalls, attempts to rebel often led to the males'. The rebelliousness of male Tragic Mulattos also put them at odds with romantic racist ideas of the time that attributed blacks with spirituality, docility, and child-like joy, thus calling into question their Christianity. Both those for and against slavery held these notions, making stereotypes such as the Tragic Mulatto useful for any agenda. While the Tragic Mulatto represented a type with black and white heritage, its focus on essentialism, blood, and social status makes it useful in analyzing characters with other racial heritages. These patterns arise in Patsy O'Wang and The Geezer, as well as Uncle Tom's Cabin, the only play here with mixed, black-and-white characters.⁵

On the American stage, the representation of mixed characters goes hand-in-hand with the history of blackface minstrelsy and its comedic yet aggressive use of white, male actors. In fact, some maintain that blackface minstrelsy, which rose in the early decades of the nineteenth century, is central to understanding all forms of American popular culture, from the spoofs of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to vaudeville's "coon shouting," to early Hollywood and beyond. On one hand, early blackface performers had esteem for the black performers they saw in urban areas like New York, and put much effort into imitating them. On the other hand, blackface minstrelsy rose out of white anxiety regarding competition over jobs, provided a venue for working-class Irish to identify as white, and purveyed negative stereotypes of blacks. The most popular stage example of the Tragic Mulatto was Irish American playwright Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859). Here, Zoe, a woman with one-eighth black blood, is in a doomed affair with her cousin, George. In the end, Zoe and George

⁴ In addition to Sollors's text, Judith R. Berzon's *Neither White nor Black* provides a valuable background on these aspects of the Tragic Mulatto. Judith R. Berzon, *Neither White nor Black: The Mulatto Character in American Fiction* (New York: New York University Press, 1978).

⁵ Also see George M. Fredrickson's *The Black Image in the White Mind* for more background on ideas of romantic racialism. Sterling A. Brown, "Negro Character as Seen by White Authors," *Journal of Negro Education* 2.2 (1933): 160, George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Middletown, Conn.; Scranton, Pa.: Wesleyan University Press; Distributed by Harper & Row, 1987).

cannot be together, she poisons herself rather than be with another man, and the remaining characters die in a steamboat explosion. The Octoroon incorporates themes of unrequited love, marginality, and even incest that reappear in many Tragic Mulatto texts, and serves as a model to compare other works of American literature concerning racial mixing, whether fiction or drama.⁶

By the 1890's writers such as Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, and George Washington Cable managed to re-work the Tragic Mulatto trope in their works, Puddn'head Wilson, The Wife of His Youth, and The Grandissimes, but the dominant representation of mixed-race on the American stage reflected the same tropes that blackface minstrelsy established. In fact, vaudeville, in many ways minstrelsy's direct descendant, broadened the American stage's dealing with racial identity to include many minority and white ethnic groups. The reliance on stereotype was central to its subject matter, as well as its appeal. In vaudeville,

Asians had odd-sounding languages, bizarre diets, and wore pigtailed; Germans spoke "Dutch," drank lager beer, and ate sauerkraut and sausage; and Irishmen had brogues, drank whiskey, partied, and fought. Exaggerating these ethnic "peculiarities" and minimizing or ignoring their commonplace features, minstrels and their vaudeville successors molded distinct ethnic caricatures, each of which sharply contrasted to all the others. (Toll 92)

These performances helped make America's increasing heterogeneity "comprehensible and manageable" for the audiences. However, in addition to reconciling different groups to each other, Gavin Jones credits the linguistic twists performers used to the "personality-dominated star system of vaudeville," where a recognizable actor's presence and improvisation of the dialect would make the performance his or her own. He argues that vaudeville's antipathy towards proper English was a means to use humor to alleviate the "linguistic insecurities of the large acculturating element of its immigrant audience," while they strove to speak better English from day to day. Likewise, the nonsense onstage helped different ethnic groups communicate to each

⁶ For further reading on blackface minstrelsy, see Annemarie Bean, et al's collection, Inside the Minstrel Mask. Love and Theft, by Eric Lott stands as the pre-eminent text on the subject. Blackface, White Noise, by Michael Rogin, takes a less forgiving stance on minstrelsy, but does extend the discussion into early film history and the assimilation of Jewish Americans. Sollors uses Boucicault's play as a touchstone throughout his Neither White nor Black yet Both, as it exhibits so many prevalent themes in interracial literature. Annemarie Bean, James Vernon Hatch and Brooks McNamara, Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), Dion Boucicault, The Octoroon (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Literature House, 1970), Eric Lott, Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class, Race and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Michael Paul Rogin, Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

other and ease the shock of the “confusingly heterogeneous city” outside (Jones 173-77).⁷

These are solid observations regarding the play of stereotypes in melodramas such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and vaudeville pieces such as *Patsy O’Wang* and *The Geezer*, but most relevant to this paper is the obvious purpose Jones cites: “to demean through laughter the otherness of foreign speech.” Surely, negotiation and acculturation were processes the performers and spectators of vaudeville took part in. But, as an inheritor of blackface minstrelsy’s treatment of race, racial aggression is central to vaudeville’s humor. In her exploration of the autobiographies of ethnic impersonators, Laura Browder addresses the same topic:

While ethnic impersonators may free themselves from the historical trap of an unwanted identity by passing into a new one, their success rests on their ability to manipulate stereotypes, thus further miring their audience in essentialist racial and ethnic categories. (Browder 10-11)

The performers under discussion in this paper were such changelings who may have been escaping from their own identities. They knew how to effectively manipulate essentialist beliefs and shed light on American identities in general. The plays also marked blacks, Asians, mixed-race people, and other immigrant groups as non-white, and thus, subordinate, and associated the actors more closely with their white identity. Michael Omi and Howard Winant would call these plays acts of racial formation, or “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.” This is a “process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized,” as well as contributing to the hegemonic ways in which society is organized (Omi and Winant 55-56). The idea of racial formation, which can offer a framework to many historical situations, is central to understanding the aggression of these plays. Whether consciously or not, these plays were also racial projects, serving needs immediately relevant to those involved.

The treatment of racial mixing in these plays both reflects the participants’ racial identity, and serves as a tool towards the racial identity they wished to achieve. Just as important as their aggressive, racial project against subordinate groups is how the plays associated the actors, writers, and audiences more closely with a free, white, male identity they had varying grasps upon. Matthew Frye Jacobson points out how “laying claim to whiteness” was central in minstrelsy and vaudeville, and suggests that its decline in the 1930s was due to the diminished need for such a “whitener” (Jacobson 12). Likewise, David Roediger claims that minstrels were the “first self-consciously white entertainers in the world,” and that their physical and cultural disguises emphasized their whiteness—that whiteness mattered (Roediger 117). By the end of the nineteenth century and the rise of vaudeville, those of many European ethnicities

⁷ Joyce Flynn also provides a useful history of themes of interracialism in American drama up to the early twentieth century. Joyce Flynn, “Melting Plots: Patterns of Racial and Ethnic Amalgamation in American Drama before Eugene O’neill,” *American Quarterly* 38.3 (1986).

could participate in racial project, whether as performers, authors, impresarios, or spectators.⁸

Omi and Winant's inclusion of "human bodies" in their definition of racial projects is especially relevant to the discussion of drama. One could consider any piece of drama as a racial project, but it is especially true with plays with such racial themes as the three in this paper, considering their emphasis on the actors' presences. Richard Dyer's *White* makes further connections between the idea of race and the representation and organization of bodies:

All concepts of race are always concepts of the body and also of heterosexuality. Race is a means of categorising different types of human body which reproduce themselves. It seeks to systematize differences and to relate them to differences of character and worth. Heterosexuality is the means of ensuring, but also the site of endangering, the reproduction of these differences. (Dyer 20)

He goes on to consider how racial mixture is a prevalent threat to the purity of races. United States history offers quite a few projects to regulate race mixture and its progeny, including anti-miscegenation laws, immigration restrictions, and changing racial categories. However, cultural representations are just as central as these other means. Uncle Tom's Cabin, Patsy O'Wang, and The Geezer have provided interpretations, representations, and explanations of mixed-race people comparably effective in regulating and producing race as laws, riots, and pseudoscientific texts. They and contributed to the discourse on racial identity in their own time, and influenced racial representations of the future.

Charles Townsend's Uncle Tom's Cabin, a Melodrama in Five Acts (1889)⁹

The most popular stage version of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1853 novel was George L. Aiken's 1852 adaptation. Despite the omission of abolitionist speeches, the alteration of characters' appearances, and the transformation of minor scenes in the book into dramatic spectacle, Aiken's play remained faithful to Stowe's abolitionist message. However, this ideological faithfulness, as well as the use of white actors to play mulatto characters, revolved around four points regarding the representations of

⁸ It is no coincidence that Irish Americans, who often had a tenuous hold on mainstream whiteness, played such important parts in the history of minstrelsy. The same can be said for Jewish Americans and their presence in vaudeville. The binding of these groups with racial minorities onstage echoed the short social distance they had from them. Likewise, maneuverings against/away from racial minorities reflected their own efforts to assimilate into mainstream whiteness. Jacobson's work is especially helpful in understanding these trends.

⁹ I first learned of this play through Stephen Rialton's extensive Uncle Tom's Cabin website (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/>). Quite a few of his plays exist in microfilm, in the *English and American Drama of the Nineteenth Century* series. Otherwise, it has been difficult finding reviews or a production history of Townsend's plays, or even a biography of Townsend himself. Charles Townsend and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, a Melodrama in Five Acts* (New York: H. Roorbach, 1889).

mixed-race on the American stage: the rebelliousness of male, mixed characters; the sexual currency of female, mixed characters; the essentialist inheritance of traits from each parent group; and marginality from both parent groups. Aiken's was an anomaly because of its great length (six acts and thirty one scenes) at a time when most plays featured performances by singers, dancers, acrobats, and ventriloquists between the acts, as well as a farcical skit after the play. Its great length also called for an abridgement, which Charles Townsend provided through his *Uncle Tom's Cabin, A Melodrama in Five Acts*. Although Aiken's name doesn't appear anywhere in Townsend's text, nearly every line of dialogue and most of the stage business are taken directly from the earlier dramatization. By emphasizing how few actors or set changes it needs, Townsend's acting script presents itself as a comparatively simple production, explaining,

It will be observed that this version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may be played with but twelve persons; and the acts are so arranged that, by doubling as above, no re-changes of costumes or make-up are required. The scenery, too, is very simple. It will be observed that only four changes are required, instead of thirty-one. (Railton)

Published in 1889, Townsend's script may have been intended for use by very small companies or amateur productions well into the 1890s, continuing a proliferation of adaptations that had begun within years of the publication of the original novel. The popularity of these "Tom Shows" coincided with the "moment of minstrelsy's greatest popularity" and provided a venue for the debates of the time to play out on the stage. Stowe's loss of the lawsuit that would have given her recourse over the adaptations meant that they would continue, both with an anti-slavery tone, and a more burlesque, anti-abolitionist one. The latter group emphasized slapstick, stereotypes of blacks, and the idealization of plantation life. The alteration of the original story became so great that by time Stowe saw an adaptation as it toured in New Haven, she had to ask her companion to explain the plot.¹⁰

However, by Townsend's 1889 publication, slavery had ended and it was no longer an abolitionist play. Well into the twentieth century, Stowe's work continued to be a controversial item, especially since the end of the Civil War and emancipation remained unresolved topics. Post-war adaptations of the novel were themselves modes of reception of the novel—as well as means of remembering the war. From this perspective, dramatizations such as Townsend's operated in three main ways. First, they helped reconstruct a public memory of the war period, aiding viewers in making sense of it, much like Vietnam movies do for us today. Second, they allowed viewers to re-work Stowe's melodrama into a different shape, de-emphasizing the spirituality, abolitionism, or cruelty of slavery according to the desires of the author and audience. Townsend's version, especially as a radical abridgement, works on this level. Third, the dramatizations contributed to a theme of reconciliation between different sections of the nation. In this way, *Uncle Tom* becomes a sacrificial lamb for the wrongs of the nation;

¹⁰ Stowe also believed in the expatriation of blacks and the eventual extinction of mulattos. Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* 191, Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas, Tex.: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985) 64-86.

the reunions of various characters become the reunion of the North and the South; and Shelby's attempt to re-purchase Tom becomes a proxy for viewers' best intentions regarding slavery—a sort of reconciliation without contact or reparation.

As performed by Townsend's company in 1889, James T. Smith played the role of George Harris. The play opens with George revealing his plans to escape to his wife, Eliza. He laments his treatment as a slave, questions the authority of his master, and wishes that neither he nor his young son had ever been born, protesting,

I have been careful, and I have been patient, but it's growing worse and worse—flesh and blood can't bear it any longer. Every chance he can get to insult and torment me he takes. He says that though I don't say anything, he sees that I've got the devil in me, and he means to bring it out; and one of these days it will come out, in a way that he won't like, or I'm mistaken. (Townsend and Stowe 8)

This is a typical mix of yearning and melancholy seen in male Tragic Mulattos. The claim of “the devil in me” also reflects romantic racist ideas about the spirituality of blacks and the restlessness of whites. As a typical nineteenth-century Tragic Mulatto, he has inherited both qualities from his parent races.

Later, George encounters the slave hunter, Gumption Cute, in the woods, and reveals that he is the runaway slave whom Cute is looking for.

George: Where are they? I am George Harris.

Cute: Oh, git out! You ain't a nigger.

George: I am. Coursing through my veins are a few drops of African blood which make me a wretched slave—a thing to be kicked and cursed; aye, to be branded like a galley slave. Look at that. (shows hand with letter “H” marked on back)

Cute: I swan to gunner! It makes my blood run cold. And yet, you don't talk like a slave.

George (proudly): No, because I am a freeman. I have said “master” for the last time to any man.

Cute: But, gol darn the luck, you may be nabbed! The cusses air after you now. (Townsend and Stowe 13)

George is fair enough to pass as white, but also speaks and behaves in an acceptable manner. Following Sterling Brown's observations of the Tragic Mulatto, these characteristics make him appealing to white audiences.

The audience was readier to sympathize with heroes and heroines nearer to themselves in appearance. The superiority wished upon the octoroons was easily attributed to the white blood coursing in their veins, and the white audience was thereby flattered. On the other hand, the unflinching

tragic outcomes supported the belief that mixture of the races was a curse. (Brown 161-62)

Likewise, they would find his rebellious behavior and divided personality an acceptable contribution to his pending downfall.

Smith also played the character, Sambo, one of Legree's slaves, who brings his master the lock of hair Uncle Tom had kept as a charm, does Legree's bidding disciplining and fetching fellow slaves, and performs a little song and dance for Legree when he needs entertainment. This character most closely resembles Sterling Brown's Contented Slave stereotype. However, Sambo only appears in the last act of the play, before George's return. According to Townsend's stage direction, he wears a "blue cotton shirt, straw hat, rough trousers, no coat," while George appears in either a business suit or a Prince Albert suit, with stylish accessories. The difference in physical appearance between these two characters conforms to stereotypes of mixed and unmixed African Americans, and raises George to a more sympathetic level; George desires freedom to correct the splitting up of his family, and Sambo is despicable in his service to the cruel Legree. What is interesting is how Smith—or whoever else may act in Townsend's adaptation—was able to move between these two characters. He became the mulatto, George Harris, then the contented slave, Sambo, only to return to being the mulatto again. He moved from a character with some white blood, to one probably of a darker complexion, and back to the more pure one. In other words, he moved away from the good attributes of whiteness, and back towards them.

In Townsend's original cast, Anne Vincent played Eliza, who urges her husband to be careful and patient, but also manages to escape and catch up with him. Within an exchange between Shelby and the slave trader Haley, the script takes a moment to discuss her fair appearance:

Shelby: That's Eliza's boy. I couldn't let him go; it would break her heart.

Haley: Stuff! Niggers ain't got no hearts.

Shelby: But Eliza is as white as your are.

Haley: She's a slave, ain't she? And don't that make her a nigger?
Wal I reckon. (Townsend and Stowe 10)

She may have a white complexion, but her status as a slave defines her racially. Vincent also played Legree's slave, Cassy, who is also of mixed descent. Cassy appears in the last act to scold Legree for his treatment of Tom:

Cassy: Simon Legree, take care! (LEGREE lets go his hold) You're afraid of me,

Simon, and you've reason to be; for I've got the Devil in me!

Legree: I believe to my soul you have. After all, Cassy, why can't you be friends with me, as you used to?

Cassy (bitterly): Used to!

Legree: I wish, Cassy, you'd behave yourself decently.
(Townsend and Stowe 39)

Cassy, like George, claims to have the devil in her. This exchange also hints at Legree's sexual exploitation. However, Townsend's script eliminates her connection to Eliza, as well as much of her background. Those familiar with Stowe's novel may have been able to fill in these blanks, but for others, Cassy's lack of depth brings her closer to a popular stereotype. As Deborah Gray White writes,

One of the most prevalent images of black women in antebellum America was of a person governed almost entirely by her libido, a Jezebel character. In every way Jezebel was the counterimage of the mid-nineteen-century ideal of the Victorian lady... The image of Jezebel excused miscegenation, the sexual exploitation of black women, and the mulatto population. (White 28-29)

This stereotype persisted through Reconstruction, and echoes in some representations of black women to this day. At the time of Townsend's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, viewers would have been able to connect the insinuations of intimacy with Legree with what White later writes of as the Jezebel (White 61). The fact that Cassy has white parentage makes this a representation of a mixed-race character as well. It suggests that Eliza's own mother was a Jezebel, available to exploitation, and that Cassy may have inherited these qualities from her own, black mother. She cannot help it; this libidinity is in her blood, just as her white father passed on his omeriness. Furthermore, whether Townsend's version reveals that she is Eliza's mother, it holds her in opposition to the daughter. With her husband and child, her good manners, and her spirituality, Eliza is much closer to the Victorian ideal than Cassy, who differs from her on each of these points. Like Smith, Vincent moves from more sympathetic character, to a lesser one, and back. Physically, she transforms from Eliza, who Townsend describes as wearing, "Tidy house dress. Handkerchief about head. Red cheeks and lips," to Cassy, who Townsend describes as "Cheap cotton wrapper. Hair unbound. Face pale. Very fierce and vindictive in manner." Both of these actors' movements allow for the viewer to sympathize with them—as well as their fairer characters—more.

Reviews for Townsend's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are nonexistent, as it was one of multitudes of Tom Shows in the late nineteenth century. However, Thomas Gossett provides insight into the reception of the play during that period. He asserts that after the Civil War, adaptations of Stowe's novel became so popular, with traveling companies and established theaters bringing the play to hundreds of thousands of people by the end of the century. During this time, "it so frequently pandered to popular taste that its antislavery theme was weakened and its black characters became increasingly stereotyped." Performances increased the degree of spectacle by adding live dogs, fake blood, and gold chariots. Other, smaller productions featured as few as three actors playing all the roles. Even though critics and those involved with the book and play during the war period decried the productions for their low artistic value, they increased in popularity in the North, and eventually the South. Gossett suggests that

“there is a world of indirect evidence that the play did not cause audiences to reflect on the meaning of slavery or the role of the free black in society” (Gossett 367-87).¹¹

The same was true for Townsend's version. It ends with Tom's death, a chorus of “Poor Old Slave,” and (if possible) a tableau of Eva in heaven. The text of the last scene gives no indication of slapstick, leaving melodrama as the driving force of the scene, and the play overall. Most likely, viewers of Townsend's Uncle Tom's Cabin were moved by the familiarity of the story, and its sentimental elements. Given this melodrama, the story of George and Eliza is central to Townsend's Uncle Tom's Cabin. They open the play, and disappear until near the end, contributing to the work's arc. Building sympathy with their story is central to the unity of the whole play. Towards this end, the author pulled from popular, literary, and scientific conventions regarding mulattos and mulatto characters. These two characters provide a framing device that relied on contemporaneous conceptions of race, character, and essential inheritance.¹²

The appeal of dramatizations of Stowe's novel lay in their flexibility. They may have been racist or anti-racist—or anti-racist enough help viewers come to terms with recent history. They could be comedic or melodramatic. The use of blackface could be burlesque, or a concession to segregation and casting mores of the time. As Stephen Railton writes regarding the differences between Aiken's and Townsend's plays, “It is interesting to see, however, or rather not see, the parts of Aiken's version of Stowe's story that Townsend feels can be left out” (Railton). The violence throughout could be slapstick or poignant, depending on the direction and performance of the particular cast at hand. The versatility of the play makes it impossible to determine where it stands in relation to these extremes. Overall, this vagueness was central to the popularity of late nineteenth century Tom Shows. The plays, just like their cast, could take on any number of markings to change the overall work.

Thomas Stewart Denison's Patsy O'Wang, an Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up (1895)¹³

¹¹ Changes in the story's denouement—including the Union army's appearance, Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, or Uncle Tom's ascent to heaven—had different effects on the play's reception, as well as its role in shaping public memory. Legree's whipping of Uncle Tom could become slapstick (with Tom rising to do “a good ol' plantation dance” before dying), chilling melodrama (with fake blood pouring over Tom's head and shoulders, or a sporting exhibition (when black boxer, Peter Jackson, played the role). Children and adults who saw the play were quicker to remember the spectacles than the underlying message.

¹² In the end, George and Eliza end up in Canada, rather than Africa, as Stowe intended. Rather than being the one who buries Tom before Shelby arrives, in this version George reappears in the last scene, accompanying Shelby in his effort to re-purchase Tom.

¹³ Robert G. Lee's *Oriental* was the first place I had heard of Denison's play. I was able to find a copy of it in Dave Williams's collection, *The Chinese Other*, but have had difficulties finding reviews or a production history. Denison founded T.S. Denison and Company, which continues to publish educational materials. During the early years of its existence, though, it mostly published vaudeville sketches and dramatic readings, many of which he authored. A number of these are also available on microfilm, through

A large number of Chinese immigrated to the United States between the start of the California gold rush in 1849 and 1882. With the onset of hard economic times in the 1870s, other immigrants began to compete for jobs traditionally reserved for the Chinese, including agricultural labor, railroad construction, and low-paying industrial jobs, resulting in dislike and even racial suspicion and hatred. These sentiments led to anti-Chinese violence and pressure for the cessation of Chinese immigration into the United States, especially in California. Ultimately, the pressure resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), which virtually ended Chinese immigration for nearly a century.¹⁴ During these years, another legacy of minstrelsy arose that expressed the anxieties of white workers: “yellowface” performance, or the use of white actors for Asian roles. As Robert G. Lee writes,

Yellowface minstrelsy also contained and displayed the racialized Chinese body. To the extent that the moral ambiguities and anomalies signified by the Chinese body posed a danger of moral contamination, the yellowface minstrel provided the sanctioned space through which to view the unknowable. (Lee 43)

Yellowface minstrelsy shared with its predecessor the use of makeup to mark white actors, the reliance on stereotype, and the racial formation of both whiteness and otherness. However, it differed in two main ways: the themes of moral contamination that were central to perceptions of Asians, and the foreign exoticism that surrounded the Chinese. While blackface minstrelsy was based on a racial group pressed into servitude that had been in America since the 1600s, yellowface minstrelsy filled in the blanks regarding an exotic, foreign group that increased in numbers only after the Civil War.

Lee also gives seven images of Asians in American popular culture that portray them as alien bodies and threats to the nation: the pollutant, the deviant, the yellow peril, the model minority, the gook, and the coolie. Some of these are twentieth century constructions, but the last came about in the 1870s and 1890s as the U.S. working class was forming. Ascribing the derogatory name coolie to migrant Chinese laborers provided white workers with a perceived threat to their employment opportunities, and an “other” to act against, sometimes violently. Additionally, politicians used this threat to rally white workers together in the name of “free labor,” as opposed to “coolie labor” or “nigger work” (Lee; Roediger; Saxton). Once again, a racial minority group found itself

the English and American Drama of the Nineteenth Century series. Thomas Stewart Denison, "Patsy O'wang, an Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up," The Chinese Other, 1850-1925: An Anthology of Plays, ed. Dave Williams (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997).

¹⁴ For further reading on the political use of anti-Chinese sentiment, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the bundling of all Asian ethnicities, see the following: Andrew Gyory, Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), Ronald T. Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans, Updated and rev. ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998).

the adversary to a racial project that played out on the streets, in the ballots, and on the stage.

Thomas Stewart Denison's 1895 comedy, Patsy O'Wang, an Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up, is a prime example of yellowface performance and its use to portray mixed, Asian characters, just as blackface portrayed mixed, African-American characters. This play tells the story of Chin Sum (aka Patsy O'Wang), a half-Irish and half-Chinese man who works in the home of Dr. Henry Fluke and his wife. Denison writes in his director's notes, "Whiskey, the drink of his father, transforms him into a true Irishman, while strong tea, the beverage of his mother, has the power of restoring fully his Chinese character" (Denison 126-27). This premise drives the rest of the play. Dr. Fluke believes that he is privy to this information, and when Patsy becomes drunk, terrorizing one of his patients and becoming generally unmanageable, he hatches a plan to force-feed black tea to the cook. However, Patsy is fully cognizant of the effects of whiskey and tea upon his behavior; its implementation is what brought him to the United States in the first place. He dupes the Flukes into believing that their plan has worked, but announces in the end that he has decided to stick with whiskey and his rowdy, Irish character. Now in the "land of opportunity," Patsy decides to go into politics, making what the Flukes's Irish servant, Mike calls, "a split ticket, half Irish, half Chinay." The play closes with Patsy singing a song, to the tune of "Pat Molloy," retelling his life story and his future plans.

A fool for luck, the proverb says, a fool O'Wang must be,

But now I'm turned true Irishman, bad cess to all Chinee.

And in this free Ameriky I'll have a word to say;

I'm goin' into politics, I'll drink no more green tay.

And for the moral of this tale, I'm sure it's very plain:

When tippie stirs your blood too much, you'd better just abstain.
(Denison 148)¹⁵

On one hand, the resignation to whiskey offers a poignant twist to the story, an answer to the extreme position of the time's temperance movement, and a spoof of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which was published in 1886. But on another, what really comes through are notions of essentialism and genetic transmission of character and culture.¹⁶

¹⁵ Also notable is his lack of a discernable accent, unlike Mike, or his Chinese alter-ego. Denison, "Patsy O'wang, an Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up," 148.

¹⁶ See the following for more on the re-gendering of theater, rehabilitation of temperance movement, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union's cultural production: K. Austin Kerr, "Organizing for Reform: The Anti-Saloon League and Innovation in Politics," *American Quarterly* 32.1 (1980), Richard Butsch, "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences," *American Quarterly* 46.3 (1994), Alison M. Parker, "Hearts Uplifted and

Similar to the treatment of George Harris in Townsend's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is Patsy's physicality. Much of the play involves his torment of Dr. Fluke's patient, their chasing him through the house, and his seeming ability to drink gallons of tea. Here, Dr. Fluke interacts with the strong-willed Patsy:

Patsy (determinedly): It means you can't fill me up with tea and turn me back into a Chinaman. They did that trick in Hong Kong!

Dr. Fluke (crossly): What are you now? Irish or Chinese?

Patsy: Irish forever.

Dr. Fluke: But confound you man, I hired you for a Chinaman. A bargain's a bargain.

Patsy: That bargain is off. (Denison 147)

Here his rebelliousness and desire for freedom connects him to male, Tragic Mulatto characters and essentialist notions of racial inheritance. However, Patsy rejects the roles that people assign him. He also asserts his Irish-ness even more so for others to accept him as such. He has decided to subscribe to the *herrenvolk*, free, male variation of whiteness emergent in nineteenth century California—and similar to the identity that the other projects in this paper serve. He may even take up an anti-Chinese platform as his political career advances, bringing that group the “bad cess” he sings of.¹⁷

Patsy provides an interesting case, because of the agency that he exercises. Unlike George and Eliza, he can decide how he would like to identify himself racially. He sides with his Irish character, a luxury the mixed characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* do not have. This is because, even though these two works are contemporaneous, they address different concerns. The question of Chinese exclusion (presumably in California) is much different than the place of mulattos in the South. Thus, the drama Denison creates in response is much different. In any case, Patsy O'Wang presents another opportunity for the audience to sympathize with a likeable, mixed character striving for independence, influence, and a more advantageous racial identity, at the ends of the other racial projects of this time. The main character's embrace of assimilation foreshadows debates about ethnic identity and the choices of mixed-race people well into the twentieth century.

Minds Refreshed": The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Production of Pure Culture in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of Women's History* 11.2 (1999).

¹⁷ Similar to the comparative approach of this paper, Tomás Almaguer's *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* explores the variable racial environment present in late nineteenth century California, one that presented made the particular experiences of blacks, Asians, Mexicans, and Native Americans different, but that resulted in a system of white, male dominance. Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

Joseph W. Herbert's *The Geezer* (c. 1896)¹⁸

The *Geisha* or, a *Story of a Tea House*, composed by Sidney Jones, with lyrics by Harry Greenbank and based on a book by Owen Hall, was a popular, British musical first produced in 1896, running longer in London than any single Gilbert & Sullivan play. It tells the story of a British naval officer stationed in the orient who falls in love with a geisha. His fiancée learns of their developing relationship, comes to Japan, and disguises herself as a geisha to win him back. A local overlord aims to disperse the geishas and possess the new arrival, but the British entourage rescues her. In the end, the naval officer marries his fiancée, the geisha marries an Asian man, and a French woman marries the overlord. While Hall was careful to ensure the accuracy of the portrayal of Japanese life on stage, with Japanese people attending rehearsals and extensive consultation with the Japan Society of London, its treatment of racial types surely reflects its times, sustaining the fascination for all things oriental. As one critic of a recent re-recording of the operetta writes,

The work smacks of stuffy late-Victorian colonialism, and is suffused with attitudes and lyrics that could cause Asian associations to riot today. The main comedy part is a Chinese laundryman/teahouse manager saying “wellee” instead of “very”—the sort of thing that presumably caused great mirth from the time of the Boxer Rebellion. (Traubner)

However, his review admits that it is terribly catchy, despite its condescension upon Asians, its attempts at “oriental” music, and its borrowing from Gilbert & Sullivan. Still, even though *The Geisha* lags behind *Madama Butterfly* and *The Mikado* in popularity today, it survived as a perennial favorite in Central Europe decades after its 1896 debut (Traubner).¹⁹

The Geezer (c. 1896) is a parody of the popular musical by a young actor and dramatist named Joseph Herbert, commissioned by popular vaudeville performers, Joe Weber and Lew Fields, who owned and managed Weber and Fields Music Hall on Broadway between 1896-1904. As such, it treats the interactions between Chinese, Americans, and British in a more burlesque fashion. At the center of *The Geezer* is the Chinese ambassador, Li Hung Chang's, mission to the U.S. to find a wife for his nation's

¹⁸ Besides a brief online biography of Herbert (<http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/whowaswho/H/HerbertJosephW.htm>), very little background information on the playwright or his other works is available. The play did appear at Weber & Fields' Broadway Music Hall during the week of October 26, 1896, along with five other vaudeville acts. Otherwise, there are just two copies of *The Geezer* in existence. Joseph W. Herbert, "The Geezer," (c. 1896).

¹⁹ At the same time the Sino-Japanese War had recently ended, with Japan's decided defeat over the Chinese and increased influence in the Far East. European powers proceeded to “carve up the Chinese melon,” a process that echoed their partitioning of Africa. Along with America, they began to scramble for what was called “spheres of interest,” resulting in a policy in which commercial opportunities were equally available to all European powers and the political and territorial integrity of China remained untouched. These events contributed to the increased interest in things oriental, as well as the presence of various western powers in *The Geisha* and *The Geezer*.

emperor. In the states, he encounters Lord Dunraving, a British naval officer; Weary Watkins, a former U.S. general who has landed on hard times; and an assortment of sailors, ladies, and entertainers. A number of love triangles unfold between various combinations of white men and Chinese women, as well as Chinese men and white women. It turns out that Li Hung Chang plans to marry the American heiress, Nellie Fly, a striving journalist who has agreed to marry the emperor for the sake of getting an exclusive interview. The American and British men pursue Li Hung Chang across the Pacific, and, by dressing Weary Watkins as the emperor, spoil his plans.

What is remarkable about the play is its mixture of voices, costumes, and bodies. Following Herbert's directions, all of the actors were native, white Americans. However, his notes call for them to take on accents of European ethnic groups while playing Chinese roles.

Two-Hi was played by a German Comedian [Sam Bernard], who made up like a Chinaman and put on a chin piece, such as a Dutchman would wear. As the parts were specially written for this special company under my stage direction, I suggested that the part be played as a composite character; a Dutch Chinaman.

Li Hung Chang was played by an Irish Comedian [John T. Kelley] who made up exactly like Li Hung Chang, but spoke in Irish dialect. (Jones 173)²⁰

By "German Comedian," Herbert means a native, white American playing German. Likewise, "Irish Comedian" implies the same regarding someone playing Irish. What resulted was a performance where white, American men dressed as Chinese, but spoke with stereotypical Irish and German accents. Hybridization and racial mixing took place on the bodies of the actors. Through his role in *The Geezer*, Sam Bernard became an English, German, and Chinese hybrid. Likewise, John T. Kelley became English, Irish, and Chinese.

Besides the appearance of Li Hung Chang and Two-Hi, there are two other moments where hybridization upon white actors' bodies becomes central. First is the eighth song of the score, led by the British naval officer, Lord Dunraving, where he sings of sailors of different ethnicities, imitating each. He moves from Chinese, to Irish, to German, to African American, to Italian. The lyrics he sings in draw upon stereotypes of each group, but otherwise are nonsensical, subordinate to the song's rhyme scheme. In the last stanza of the song, Dunraving returns to being English and professing his love for the heiress, Nellie Fly:

When the Anglo-main

Meets Miss Bankroll-Jane

²⁰ For more on the use of immigrant stereotypes and dialect in vaudeville, see the following: Holger Kersten, "Using the Immigrant's Voice: Humor and Pathos in Nineteenth Century 'Dutch' Dialect Texts," *Melus* 21.4, *Ethnic Humor* (1996), Carl Wittke, "The Immigrant Theme on the American Stage," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39.2 (1952).

He simply says, "My dear, my dear"

You have money to burn

I cannot earn

Can't I be your fireman?

I have no fear.

These lines project sincerity and bravery as characteristically English traits (Herbert 16-19). The second moment is when the former American general, Weary Watkins, enters, disguised as the Chinese emperor. This is the final stage in the Anglo-American plot to rescue Nellie Fly. He quickly puts Li Hung Chang under arrest and hands the situation over to Lord Dunraving.

Interracial relationships are central to the story of *The Geezer*. From the beginning, British sailors have a thing for Chinese women. The wandering minstrel, Kantanker, is in love with O Le Mosa Sam, a Chinese prima-donna. Nellie Fly agrees to marry the Chinese emperor, a plan that Li Hung Chang sabotages so that he can marry her himself. However, in the end, not one interracial relationship comes to fruition. Li Hung Chang closes the New York tea houses that the British sailors visit. Kantanker is absent when Weary Watkins puts O Le Mosa Sam under Dunraving's protection. Nor are there any characters of mixed descent. The hybridity takes place solely on the bodies and voices of the white, male performers, which they use to rush across the globe, disciplining Chinese men, and rescuing professional-minded, white women.²¹ This is an adventure for the viewers to enjoy, but it is also decidedly imperialist, chauvinist and anti-miscegenation.

Reviews of *The Geezer* have been hard to come by, but secondary writings on dialect writing may shed light on the audiences' general attitude towards what they were seeing. For example, Carl Wittke says, "American audiences saw these inaccurate stage immigrant characters and heard these dialects so long that many accepted them as completely authentic, although character traits, overplayed for comic effect, obviously emphasize idiosyncracies and deviations from the general folk pattern." Wittke acknowledges that the stereotypes formed people's perceptions of different groups, but credits audiences with being able to discern their exaggerations. He also notes how each minority group aimed to "clean up the caricature" as they gained more social and economic security (Wittke 232). Holger Kersten takes a position similar to Gavin Jones's regarding the humor of vaudeville's ethnic stereotypes: "What is important here

²¹ The science fiction film, *Blade Runner* (1982), presents a model of hybridity much like that in *The Geezer*. What is remarkable here is how the replicants, whose body parts come from scientists of all races, stand in for a mixed-race population. Their white appearance masks the racial undertones of the story, and expresses how phenotype does not always express genotype. Like the nineteenth century Tragic Mulatto, the replicants also possess a catastrophic flaw beyond their control: namely, imperfect engineering.

is that the collective laughter created a sense of community in the audience and elevated the comedians to a plane where they became symbolic figures of displacement and alienation. They dramatized the typical immigrant experience of struggling to find one's place in the new environment" (Kersten 10-11). These positions are certainly useful in understanding the use of "Irish" and "Dutch" comedians, but *The Geezer* presents another level of complexity with its lampooning of the Chinese. The history of Chinese exclusion and America's eagerness to join in "carving the Chinese melon" make racial difference relevant to the audience's reception of Herbert's play. Many have made observations regarding ethnic groups' use of humor while in the process of assimilation, at the same time overlooking how physical appearance and the racial hierarchy in the United States have made some less versatile than their white counterparts. Audiences for *The Geezer* may have felt camaraderie with the Irish and German elements of Herbert's comedy, but antagonism towards the Chinese elements.

Conclusion

Uncle Tom's Cabin, a Melodrama in Five Acts, *Patsy O'Wang*, an Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up, and *The Geezer* are works by three different authors, featuring different types of mixed-race or hybrid characters. However, the versatility of the white actors involved is the characteristic all three of these plays share. These white men and women are able to take on various markings and move between different degrees of hybridity. On one hand, these maneuvers fulfill the needs of immigrants and others in negotiating the increasingly heterogeneous life of the late nineteenth century. On the other, they are also aggressive and often derogatory towards racial and ethnic others. This duality is comparable to the "love and theft" involved with the wellspring of nineteenth century popular entertainment, blackface minstrelsy. One could easily call this dynamic "laugh and theft" for its use of comedy to create solidarity at the expense of another's civil rights. After all, there is a difference between laughing at oneself and laughing at another who was segregated out of the venue. The works by Charles Townsend, Thomas Stewart Denison, and Joseph W. Herbert reflect ideas of racial hierarchy, the essential transmission of traits, and the pathology of miscegenation from that form of entertainment—as well as past social mores and scientific writings on racial character. Their plays were what Michael Omi and Howard Winant would call "racial projects," or historically-situated efforts to regulate, re-create, and produce race.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, *Patsy O'Wang*, and *The Geezer* have also provided interpretations, representations, and explanations of mixed-race people. The marking of white bodies to signify mixed-race or hybrid characters was as effective in regulating and producing race as any anti-miscegenation laws, race riots, or scientific texts. They contributed to the discourse on racial identity in their own time, and influenced racial representations of the future. Not only did these plays deal with hybridity, racial mixing, and other minority groups, but they also dealt with whiteness, providing a means for those involved to "lay claim" to their whiteness. Through the masked omnipresence of whiteness, these plays emphasized the non-whiteness of blacks, Asians, mixed-race people, and other immigrant groups, and associated the actors more closely with their own white identity.

The trend of white actors playing mixed-race characters by "blacking" or "yellowing up" continued well into the twentieth century. Some examples include: Ethel Lloyd as Jane in *A Florida Enchantment* (1914), George Siegmann as Silas Lynch in

Birth of a Nation (1915), Jennifer Jones in 1955's *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*, Angie Dickinson in 1957's *China Gate*, and Shirley Maclaine as Nicole Chang in 1966's *Gambit*. Minnie Driver's performance in *Sleepers* (1996) as the Irish-Puerto-Rican Carol Martinez is one example of this Tanface casting from the 1990's. Whether because of negligence or casting restrictions, these performances deny the issue of racial mixing and normalize mixed-race people into a more acceptable racial identity.

However, in the context of their own times, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Patsy O'Wang*, and *The Geezer* point to more than the versatility of white performers and the aggressive racial projects of turn-of-the-century drama. They reveal the rigid status of mixed and minority people during that time. For example, as Scott Herring writes of W.E.B. DuBois's efforts to discard the minstrel mask from black people through *The Souls of Black Folk*,

In the absence of any real communication between the races—an absence DuBois seeks to fill—the minstrel show defined what blacks were for most of its audience. What was the black “reality” created by the average minstrel show? Its characteristics are still well known, perhaps because traces of the minstrel form survived so long in the motion picture industry and showed a remarkable resiliency in live theater. (Herring 7)

The same was true for mixed-race people, Asians, and other minorities. Minstrel shows, stage melodramas, and vaudeville pieces of the time participated in a “one-sided exchange” in which entertainers took signs of other groups and created identities for them (as well as themselves). However, the social structures of the time made it difficult for minority groups to do the same. It would not be until decades later that the necessary communication concerning representations would develop.

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