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A Dramaturgical Exploration:
Setting Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* in Post-Civil War Virginia

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Abstract

A reputable theatrical company will hire a dramaturg to implement historical research and to provide reputable information where the director or staff desires it. They ensure that the play's elements are as truthful to the time period as possible and aid in a performance's overall success. If a theatrical company were to set Oliver Goldsmith's play *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1870 Virginia, it could strengthen the play's underlying religious, political, and cultural elements.

The paper is comprised of seven sections: a biography of the playwright, a religious exploration, a political analysis, a cultural comparison, a delineation of suggested script edits, a conclusion, and two illustrated appendices.

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Introduction

Should a theatrical company decide to produce *She Stoops to Conquer*, one of Oliver Goldsmith's most beloved works, and ultimately desire a successful performance run, the presence of a dramaturg is vital. This paper, written through a dramaturgical lens, will provide the historical information a company would need to successfully set this play in 1870 Virginia, highlighting the consistencies of the two time periods: 1773 England and 1870 Virginia. It will also provide educated suggestions on how one could surmount naturally-occurring obstacles. Setting Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* in Reconstruction-era Virginia is advantageous for the production because this new time period strengthens the British play's central thematic elements in regard to religion, politics, and culture.

The Author

Oliver Goldsmith was born on the 10th of November, 1728, in the Irish county of Longford. There he lived in an old, rustic mansion near Inny River which was popularly believed, among the locals, to be inhabited by fairies (Balderston xxiiib.2). He was born to a man by the name of Rev. Charles Goldsmith, a poor farmer who resolved that his children "should have learning, for learning, he used to observe, is worth more than silver and gold" (Irving 17). Because of this foundational belief, Charles Goldsmith spent all of his financial earnings on a tutor for his son, Oliver.

Oliver Goldsmith began writing poetry at the age of eight. He would pen his poems on leaves which he would throw into the fire. Many times, his mother would come behind him—when he was not paying attention—and salvage them (Irving 17). Unbeknownst to either of them, these leaf-poems would foreshadow Goldsmith's eventual prolific writing career.

In 1756, Oliver Goldsmith moved to London to continue his education at the university. However, school was a bit of a challenge for Goldsmith. He was put on probation for two years; however, it is unclear to historians what event(s) exactly transpired to warrant this discipline. His probation led him to return to Ireland to a town called Ballymahon where there is a monument erected in his honor today. He frequented a pub there and grew quite fond of it. His experiences eventually inspired the character of Tony Lumpkin and the “Three Jolly Pigeons” in *She Stoops to Conquer* (Balderston xxiib.2). In fact, Tony Lumpkin seems to be using Goldsmith's own words when he addresses Mrs. Hardcastle in Act I: “I can't stay, I tell you. The Three Pigeons expects me down every moment. There's some fun going forward” (Goldsmith 9). Goldsmith personally knew what kind of fun awaited Tony at the town pub, endowing the statement with unique credibility.

Goldsmith's utilization of personal life experience causes his plays to resonate within the hearts of English audiences. After several successful original productions, he made an impact on the contemporary theatrical style. He helped pave the way for Laughing Comedy and thus recorded his name in theatre history. He died unexpectedly in April of 1774, just one year and one month after *She Stoops to Conquer* premiered in

London. His sudden death may have been due to a misdiagnosis of a kidney infection, though the reason has never been verified for certain (Balderston xxiiib.2). However, regardless of the means of his death, his legacy continues through his beloved works of dramatic literature.

Comparison and Contrast: Time Period and Its Influence on the Play

Liberty University theatre director, Mr. Neal Brasher, decided to set Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1870 Virginia during the university's spring 2017 academic performance. In order for the company to accomplish this, it was vital for it to examine the religious, political, and cultural fabrics of both the English society during the Georgian era and the Virginian society during the Reconstruction.

Religion

Oliver Goldsmith wrote *She Stoops to Conquer* during an equally exciting and tumultuous time in British history. The religious atmosphere was certainly no exception. The First Great Awakening, most prevalent in England during the 1730's and the 1740's, emphasized church members' personal faith and challenged congregants' religious beliefs to visibly shape the way they lived. However, a philosophical movement called *The Enlightenment*, preceding the Great Awakening, also swept through the nation, challenging the intellectual grounds for religious faith. Philosophical authors like John Locke proposed the idea of the *Separation of Church and State*: an idea that was quickly adopted in the United States but remained a foreign concept for British governance. In fact, it seemed as though the interdependent relationship of the Church and State in England had reached an ideal that had been aspired to since medieval times: "The Church

upheld the ‘natural’ hierarchy of mutual obligations which were thought to provide social cohesion; the State, for its part, protected the legal establishment of Christianity as the appropriate agent for the diffusion of benevolence and public morality” (Norman 15). Religion and Government had been deeply intertwined in England for centuries, and the Church was given the important responsibility to influence societal viewpoints and promote unity among the people.

While America had adopted the notion of the *Separation of Church and State* in its legislative system, religious groups played a pivotal role in shaping military culture during the Civil War. The United States Christian Commission began November 16, 1861. It was founded in order to provide spiritual and temporal support to Union soldiers serving during the Civil War (The United States Christian Commission). However, there were some Chaplains who served in the Confederate Navy or devoted their time as Confederate sharpshooters. One such Chaplain was named Lorenzo Barber who “found no contradiction with his religious beliefs” and serving in the war (Fighting Chaplains). Chaplain Barber “shot as he prayed, or in other words, he helped to answer his own prayers by doing all he could” (Fighting Chaplains). However, not all Civil War Chaplains had a restful conscience about the war environment. Many Chaplains had great concerns for their troops’ participation with spirituous liquors, card-playing, gambling, and profanity in the camps. An unknown soldier famously stated: “If the South be overthrown, the epitaph should be ‘died of whiskey’” (Religious Revival in Confederate Military). Due to the Civil War Chaplains’ firm moral stance against the over-consumption of alcohol, setting this play in 1870 Virginia would reinforce Mr.

Hardcastle's anger in Act IV when he discovers that Marlow has ordered his servants to freely drink from the cellar. Hardcastle states: "But though I say nothing to your own conduct, that of your servants is insufferable. Their manner of drinking is setting a very bad example in this house, I assure you" (Goldsmith 52). Even though unethical behaviour such as drunkenness certainly existed within military war camps, the intensity of loss in battle made many soldiers genuinely question their religious beliefs.

Widespread Christian revivals similar to those during the English Great Awakening began to break out within the armed forces, especially between the years of 1861 and 1865. Revival meetings were usually held following an army's first experience with heavy fighting and high casualties. Between the late fall of 1863 and the summer of 1864, the Confederate army experienced a religious movement that was called *The Great Revival* (The Great Revival). In September 1862, General Robert E. Lee's army camped in Winchester, Virginia, where they held religious services twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week (see Appendix A, figure 1). Just as the British government entrusted the Church of England to promote unity among the people during the 1700's, the United States Christian Commission and the Protestant Church were tasked with the responsibility to cultivate unity among Civil War servicemen.

During the Georgian era, the Church in England also played an important role in highlighting contemporary ideological issues and served as an active voice in the political realm. Due to the political strategy that these church groups employed during election cycles, they were successful not only in informing Parliament of grievances, but also in organizing "what we to-day so often call a pressure-group" (Butterfield 376). The

Protestant Association was particularly successful in this because they were able to reach “a lower social class and it was often noted that its petition contained in many cases signatures by the marks of men who could neither read [nor] write” (Butterfield 376). Oliver Goldsmith subtly hints at this contemporary illiteracy epidemic by making Tony Lumpkin’s character unable to read. Strikingly similar to the Georgian-era people in Great Britain, illiterate freed slaves during the Reconstruction would gather with literate citizens, referred to as *Readers*, on the street corners because they desired to stay up-to-date on the current political and economic status of the country (Brinkley 420-421). Due to the influential role the clergy had on the lives of individuals, and partly due to the vulnerability of the illiterate populace, the Church held substantial wielding power in the way these individuals viewed governmental issues during both time periods.

One of the major issues that plagued church consciences in Great Britain during the mid-to-late 1770’s was the presence of the English slave trade. John Wesley, a revolutionary Protestant reformer who played a principal role in establishing the Methodist church, frequently referenced the topic of slavery in his sermons:

Clerical abolitionists went to great lengths to declare that slavery was the only issue over which they believed it proper to violate the rights of property. Wesley, in his *Thoughts of Slavery* (1774), had so respected those rights that he had argued for emancipation through individual action rather than legal compulsion. (Norman 27)

For many British abolitionists, the topic of slavery was not one based in political ideological beliefs, but in moral and ethical convictions.

John Newton, another abolitionist spokesman who was a former slave ship captain, religious convert, and devout leader, actually premiered his renowned hymn “Amazing Grace” on New Year’s Day in 1773, the same year *She Stoops to Conquer* premiered at the Covent Garden Theatre in London. Newton viewed his religious influence as many religious leaders of the time did, believing that church services were to be “a time when he would call on his congregation to assess their spiritual progress and anticipate the challenges of the year ahead. It was also a time for him to challenge those who went to church through tradition but not because of personal faith” (Turner 80). This generational Christian concept can be subtly seen in Oliver Goldsmith’s character, Mr. Hardcastle. Hardcastle makes an oath by his religious faith completely out of context after he sees his hysterical wife reveal herself from a bush: “My wife, as I’m a Christian. From whence can she come? or what does she mean?” (Goldsmith 65). Radical religious leaders like Newton would have challenged Mr. Hardcastle in their sermons with this question: how does being a Christian influence one’s daily life?

It is intriguing that the Church of England, the Protestant Association, and notable religious leaders made moves to end the practice of slavery in England an entire century prior to the American Civil War. However, it can be stated with certainty that the widespread issue of slavery plagued the minds of the American people surrounding the time of the war. In addition, the Second Great Awakening succeeded in addressing women’s rights and roles as well as the need to abolish slavery in America. This revival, primarily focused in the North, evoked a passionate response from the Christian people. Due to its shared attention to women, the Second Great Awakening paved the way for

more leadership opportunities for women within the church. The movement for women's rights and leadership roles was foreshadowed in England during the 1700s. A strong British female figure who paved the way for women's leadership and boldly spoke out against the heinous practice of slavery in 1773 was Countess Huntingdon. She protested the practice of slavery by financing the printing of *Poems on Various Subjects* by the former slave Phillis Wheatly which was "the first book by an African American to be published" (Turner 93). During these two vastly different eras, religious groups and revivals like the First and Second Great Awakening inspired women and African Americans to fight together for equality even though they were under the leadership of stagnate and confused governmental administrations.

Politics

The Church played an active role in the both English and American politics during the Georgian and Reconstruction eras. Likewise, the political climates influenced discussion topics during faith-filled gatherings and subsequently shaped the cultures' moral compasses. This was important especially in Great Britain during the year 1773. The political atmosphere during the reign of King George III was marked by rebellion, discontentment, exploration, progress, and stalemate in England. To both American and British citizens, "King George III will always be remembered as the King who lost the American colonies. This is for most people the chief political event of his reign and one with which he is most closely identified. His reputation has suffered grievously in consequence" (Brooke 162). The loss of the British colonies would be a wound deeply felt, demanding years to recover. A major Parliamentary decision that would spark the

American Revolution actually occurred in May of 1773, two months after *She Stoops to Conquer* premiered. This decision was the passage of the Tea Act of 1773, which was “designed to enable the British East India Company to increase the sale of its teas in the colonies and to increase revenues from the Townshend Act duty on tea, by authorizing the Company to ship tea to the colonies” (Knollenberg xxix). The British government could not have anticipated the kind of response this would spark among the American people. The people of Boston retaliated by disguising themselves as Native Americans and throwing overboard the tea on the Dartmouth and other ships that had later entered the Boston Harbor. This boycott is what is commonly referred to today as the *Boston Tea Party*. This historical event clearly communicated the American colonists’ discontentment with the British government’s interference in their daily affairs.

Not only was there pushback to British authority overseas, but George III and Parliament were also finding it difficult to maintain the satisfaction of the people within their own land. A prime example of this surrounded a man by the name of John Wilkes. He helped write for a journal called *The North Briton*. In one particular entry, released on April 23, 1763, Wilkes published what King George III would refer to as “blasphemous” material, thus endangering Wilkes to serious trial (Brooke 146). He was released on habeas corpus, fled to France, and then returned to England in 1768 (Brooke 147). He ran for Parliament on March 11, 1768, won a seat in Parliament, and subsequently surrendered himself to the King’s Bench to receive a jail sentence for a host of convictions for which he was not present to defend himself. Riots broke out in the streets of London at the news of Wilkes’ detainment. Mobs destroyed property and wreaked

havoc on British homes and businesses. This chaotic unrest is well-represented in one of Mr. Hardcastle's opening lines in Act I: "In my time, the follies of the town crept slowly among us, but now they travel faster than a stage-coach" (Goldsmith 7). Hardcastle is making a commentary about the quickly-spreading political and ethical corruption present in the contemporary English society.

However, the devastation that both the loss of the British colonies and the injustice of Parliament caused could not rival the political tragedies that were a reality for the American people during the Reconstruction period. In fact, one southern political leader of the time boldly asserted that "history reveals no episode more tragic" than the American Reconstruction (Stryker 790). It all began with the loss of one of America's most charismatic leaders.

Abraham Lincoln was assassinated shortly after the Civil War on April 14th at the Ford's Theatre watching *Our American Cousin* in balcony boxes seven and eight. After this tragic event, the presiding Vice President, Andrew Johnson took Lincoln's place (see Appendix A, figure 2). Johnson disliked the planter class because he felt it was responsible for initiating the war. If the Hardcastle family in *She Stoops to Conquer* were alive during this turbulent era in the American South, they would be considered a part of the planter class due to their high socio-economic status. However, Johnson's primary desire was to carry out Abraham Lincoln's vision of bringing the two segmented sections of America together with grace and unity. He took office during a time historians commonly refer to as *Presidential Reconstruction* because he was able to put certain policies in place, such as issuing hundreds of pardons to former Confederate officers and

government officials, before Congress was in session. Throughout his term, Johnson received incessant pushback from a political party called the Radical Republicans. The Radical Republicans were adamant that the southern population should receive harsh punishment, such as the elimination of their right to vote, for their rebellion during the war. The party also wanted each African American to receive forty free acres of land and a mule to help them begin his or her newly freed life (Brinkley 397). The American people were distinctly divided on fundamental national issues like these. America needed a president with strong political convictions and an unwavering drive to create legislation that would protect the country's progress and prevent backsliding.

Instead of progressive legislation, however, Johnson's policies proved to be detrimental to America's healing. Brooker T. Washington stated in 1901 that though he was young during the Reconstruction period, "I had the feeling that mistakes were being made, and that things could not remain in the condition that they were in then very long. I felt that the Reconstruction policy, so far as it related to my race, was in a large measure on a false foundation, was artificial and forced" (Stryker 790). Johnson was impeached, but not removed from office, after Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act. This Act essentially protected the office of Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. The act stated that the president was not able to fire the individual who held this office without Congressional approval. Johnson disregarded this ruling and subsequently removed Stanton from office. Johnson was found "not guilty" in his impeachment trial by one vote. Though he remained in office, he became an ineffective president (Brinkley 403). During the 1870's, before the next political cycle, his platform publically declared their

disapproval not only of Johnson's presidency but also of the widespread political corruption Johnson encouraged:

The President of the United States . . . has used the public service of the government as a machinery of corruption and personal influence . . . He has rewarded with influential and lucrative offices men who had acquired his favor by valuable presents, thus stimulated the demoralization of our political life by his conspicuous example. (Stryker 798)

Corruption like the patronage system was prominent within the American political system during the Reconstruction and made it almost impossible for lower-class Americans to participate in politics. The patronage system allowed government jobs to be given to individuals who supported a politician's political agenda and allowed for thousands of people to be removed from their jobs due to differences in political opinions. The moral inconsistencies of President Johnson's administration can be accurately summed up by Kate's line to Marlow in Act I: "You mean that in this hypocritical age there are few that do not condemn in public what they practice in private, and think they pay every debt to virtue when they praise it" (Goldsmith 32). The British people's indignation about the failures and injustices of Parliament in 1773, as revealed by Goldsmith's words, is magnified exponentially when layered with the outrage Americans felt about the teeming political corruption that was present during Andrew Johnson's presidency.

Political corruption quickly extended to the South within a year after the war ended when southern states began to pass laws referred to as *black codes* as retaliation to

the increasing number of freedmen's rights. These laws were attempts to curb African American rights as much as possible due to the ever-growing fear of *reverse slavery* or *Negro rule* amongst the white legislators (Brinkley 404). In some states, businesses would charge African Americans hefty fines for basic tasks like going to a store or using the restroom. In Virginia, the established *black codes* were seemingly less harsh than other states. Even still, these unjust laws did not help relieve racial tension in the South:

While Virginia's black code was less onerous than others in the Deep South, legal distinctions between whites and blacks were elect standing in areas relating to testimony and contracts; the General Assembly also continued the antebellum exclusion of blacks from voting and office-holding. Harsh or mild, the southern black codes seemed to be the result of efforts to find an acceptable halfway point between slavery and freedom. The legislatures' search, however, indicated that southern whites had not accepted the idea of civil equality for blacks. (Lowe 48)

The Republican Party in Virginia was for the most part "opposed to unlimited negro suffrage, until the Philadelphia convention of 1866, when 'manhood' suffrage became a party measure" (Eckenrode 7). After the Philadelphia convention decision, many African Americans gravitated toward the Republican Party along with the fact that it was the political party of Lincoln, the man who granted them independence (Brinkley 397). However, even though many freedmen were eager to be involved in politics, political corruption like the patronage system and overwhelming racial prejudice aided by the passing of *black codes* in the South made it exceptionally difficult for African

Americans to be promoted within the American governmental system, let alone exercise their newfound right to vote.

In conclusion, the political climates of both of these time periods were filled with tension, hardship, and injustice. Mr. Hardcastle expresses his feelings about politics in a way that reflected the hearts of thousands of American and British people during these tumultuous times: “Why, no, sir; there was a time, indeed, when I fretted myself about the mistakes of government, like other people; but finding myself every day grow more angry, and the government no better, I left it to mend itself” (Goldsmith 26). Fortunately, it has been seen throughout history that wearisome historical periods ultimately bind societies together.

Culture

Oliver Goldsmith’s central theme in *She Stoops to Conquer* is that the intense socio-economic importance placed on marital and courting decisions was preposterous during the eighteenth-century in England. This age-old issue of socio-economic discrimination continues to be a relevant discussion topic among the American people today. Though each culture operating under a class system has certain cultural distinctions and differences between upper and lower class individuals, the author desired the Georgian-era society to shift their focus from a person’s monetary status to a person’s character (see Appendix B, figure 6). Kate, the play’s protagonist, pretends to be a lower-class individual in order to win the heart of the man she loved, while Constance’s wealth and inheritance almost makes her lose the love of her life because of familial pressures and societal norms.

Cultural roles and expectations of women in the South during the Reconstruction were extremely similar to the standards present in Georgian-era England. For instance, there was great importance placed on physical appearance in both cultures. Wealthy white women during the Reconstruction were to “[oversee] wardrobes, [purchase] materials, and [supervise] seamstresses to ensure family members were properly garbed within the family means” (Jabour 116). Similar to that of the British aristocracy, southern women held fast to the creed that “appearances meant everything, and everyone had an investment in it. The family’s inner dramas were to remain inside the household, beyond the purview of neighbors” (Jabour 1). Women of wealth were expected to be poised, kind, well-mannered, capable, intelligent, and responsible (see Appendix B, figure 1). This way of life in the Old South is a blatant parallel to the expectations of aristocratic women in the mid-to-late eighteenth century English society.

Even though the Georgian upper class, as well as Reconstruction plantation owners in the South, may have been civilised and cultivated, these individuals were acutely aware that they were living “on the slopes of a volcano which might erupt at any time” (Brooke 149). The English social structure was not characterized by distinct divisions; however, “at the bottom was an amorphous mass for whom life was a constant struggle with few pleasures except drink and violence” (Brooke 149). The wealthy socialites of London “had the fear of what they called ‘the mob’ constantly in their minds (Brooke 149). The eighteenth-century socialites’ fear of a mob uprising is reciprocated by the frequent mention of *negro rule* among the well-to-do citizens of the Reconstruction. Some versions of *She Stoops to Conquer* say “Exeunt mob,” referring to the working-

class characters, before Marlow and Hastings arrive at the Three Jolly Pigeons in Act I (Goldsmith 15). It is interesting that Tony Lumpkin's character enjoys the company of *the mob* because English people in the Georgian-era traditionally adhered to their own social classes, while Mrs. Hardcastle reflects the normal beliefs of the time when she disapproves of the amount of time he spends with them (see Appendix B, figure 2).

This common view of the caste system during the Georgian era was paralleled by the socio-economic divisions within slave-owning households in the Reconstruction South. Before the Civil War, many slaves had household servant roles. White indentured servants also worked in the South, but there was an established hierarchical difference between the white and black servants. This common hierarchal servanthood system found in southern plantation culture is reflected in *She Stoops To Conquer*, set in the Georgian era, when Mr. Hardcastle is preparing his servants for the expected arrival of Sir Marlow's son: "You, Diggory, whom I have taken from the barn, are to make a show at the side-stable; and you, Roger, whom I have advanced from the plough, are to place yourself behind my chair" (Goldsmith 20). In this instance, there is a blatant distinction being made between the servants who work outside and the servants who work inside the house (see Appendix B, figure 3). This line in the script is strengthened by the new setting because servants who were deemed to be more civilized or intelligent were commonly placed inside the home during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

After the Emancipation Proclamation, former slaves legally became servants, and, therefore, all household servants were treated in the same manner as former slaves. They were all paid and free, but now white indentured servants were treated as lower-class

citizens. In fact, many historians believe that servanthood in the South during the Reconstruction essentially evolved into the legal form of slavery (Brinkley 407). During Reconstruction, many African Americans stayed and worked on the same plantations that they had always worked at during the war because it was familiar to them. Other freedmen used their newfound mobility to find their families and to relocate to larger cities like Atlanta and New Orleans. A failed plantation system, referred to as the *share-cropping* system, was launched during the Reconstruction period. Under this system, most of the land in the South was owned by white landowners who would frequently charge as much as fifty percent of their crop as rent. African Americans faced explicit, and sometimes violent, racism as well as higher prices when attempting to buy necessary supplies and tools. Many sharecroppers, both white and African American, went into debt attempting to make a living (Brinkley 406). This mistreatment, coupled with the demise of the southern economy and the widely-spreading news of the Industrial Revolution, pushed many white indentured servants to resign from their servant roles and search for work in northern factories (Coulter 40-72). The Industrial Revolution in the North during the Reconstruction was a beacon of hope to the servants, freedmen, and lower-class individuals in America.

Industry advancements in America caused several positive changes within the American culture. The northern economy became much more centered on industry, textiles, factories, and machinery. Because factory jobs had longer hours and paid higher wages, American citizens began to have more disposable income. As a result of the increased number of jobs created by factories, there was a significant rise in the middle-

class, and individuals began marrying for romantic reasons instead of for monetary benefits. Due to new mechanical and technological aids, the price of goods dropped as product yields dramatically increased. Toward the end of the Civil War, American products even began to shift focus to more creative avenues like fashion.

The French, who were equally as much of an influence on 1700's British fashion as they were on 1800's American fashion, were looked upon as the primary international reference when creating new products. Especially in the jewelry business, the United States greatly evolved their style from France. *Hairwork* became extremely popular in both America and France during the Civil War (see Appendix A, figure 3). *Hairwork* was a form of jewelry that was created by jewelry crafters who would obtain hair follicles from dead soldiers and would then weave the hairs into designs that could be placed in jewelry settings (Mourning Customs Civil War Era Hairwork). In nineteenth-century American culture, the presence of *hairwork* encapsulated the idea that war consumed the minds of the people, affecting men, women, and children.

Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* asserts that the cultural importance of fashion transcends gender when Marlow and Hastings discuss it upon arriving at the inn: "I have been thinking, George of changing our travelling dresses in the morning. I am grown confoundedly ashamed of mine" (Goldsmith 24). Needless to say, fashion began to have an ever-growing market in the United States and played an important role in differentiating social classes (see Appendix B, figure 4). Because of the increase and diversity of jobs in America, a person was able to work his or her way up to a higher

socio-economic class within one lifespan which foreshadowed James Truslow Adam's coinage of the phrase the *American dream* in 1931 (Brinkley 202).

Similar to the Industrial Revolution in America, the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain created more diversified job options in the English labor force and distinctly affected the socio-economic classes. Fully-fledged factory systems allowed for labor stability and more efficiency in the production of textiles and goods. In England, this working-class revitalization resulted in the overall improvement of urban cities' living conditions. However, despite these changes, the "vast majority of the King's subjects still lived and worked in rural conditions, whether as farmers or farm labourers, as village blacksmiths and craftsmen, or as domestic workers in the 'outwork' system of textile trades" (White 14). These Industrial Revolutions, though thousands of miles and a hundred years apart, created wonderful benefits for both cultures including the ability for people to attend more recreational events like theatrical performances due to their increase in disposable income.

Goldsmith's plays were explicitly shaped by this complicated Georgian culture and particularly by the ever-evolving style preferences of English theatre patrons. After the play's opening, Goldsmith penned a letter to his friend and producer, Joseph Cradock, stating: "My dear Sir, The play has met with a success much beyond your expectation or mine" (Balderston 119). It is important to note that *She Stoops to Conquer* did not have this kind of success initially. Goldsmith encountered many critics throughout the play's development who encouraged him to rewrite the play numerous times. One of these critics was Mr. George Coleman, who "produced *She Stoops to Conquer* but objected to

the “‘low’ elements which the play had to overcome” (Balderston xxxviii). What were these “low” elements? According to an anonymous letter of criticism addressed to Oliver Goldsmith, included among these controversial elements was a character named “Dullissimo Maccaroni” who was asked to be left out for the mysterious reason that the character was “much too low” (Balderston xli). Based on written letters and reviews, it can be inferred that this character probably went against the grain of contemporary theatrical social standards and conventions, specifically in regard to the character’s overt sexual dialogue.

She Stoops to Conquer was written shortly after the theatrical style period called Restoration Comedy where the sexual content within plays was very obvious. In one version of the *She Stoops to Conquer* script, Marlow stumbles his words and seems to make an explicit sexual joke during his first encounter with Kate. He says, “Those who have most virtue in their mouths, have least of it in their bosoms—breasts, no, no, hearts” (Goldsmith 34). During the time Oliver Goldsmith wrote the play, it was around one hundred and forty years after the start of the Restoration period in the midst of a period commonly referred to as the Georgian period, and audiences deemed this explicit sexuality to be entirely inappropriate for public audiences (Barton 209). Therefore, the last four words of Marlow’s line were eliminated in later versions of the script. The desire to censor the sexual content within theatrical productions most likely would have been reciprocated by the Reconstruction culture in the South. Some historians assert “that whites worried, to a greater or lesser degree, about black sexual aggression since even before the first European settlers arrived in the seventeenth century” (Sommerville 30).

Both the American culture during Reconstruction and the English culture during the Georgian period experienced uneasiness when it came to public displays of sexuality. Therefore, this omission was necessary due to the societal norms of Goldsmith's time, and southern Reconstruction society would also have required this omission in order to be socially acceptable.

The Georgian culture and the Reconstruction culture in the South cannot be simply described. It can be said, however, that these cultures contain many shocking similarities concerning socio-economic tensions, cultural expectations, servanthood, industry, fashion, theatrical style, and sexuality. However, there are some major differences between these two cultures, and historical research is necessary when adjusting the script to alleviate naturally-occurring inconsistencies.

Suggested Edits

There are several inconsistencies that occur in the script regarding its terms, allusions, and references to people because of its new setting. Because the play is public domain, the theatrical company is able to make edits to reconcile the unavoidable inconsistencies. The most prominent ones are dealt with in this section.

Word Replacement Suggestions

Ecod: The word *ecod*, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary among others, is an "archaic" word and there is currently no known definition (Merriam-Webster "ecod"). The closest resemblance to the meaning of *ecod* is the 1670's word *egad*, most likely meaning "oh, God!" (Merriam-Webster "egad"). The exclamation *egad* has been employed in other classic works of British literature. For example, Giovanni Boccaccio

employs this word in *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio*: “Egad, you would think her a plaguy fine woman!” (Boccaccio 288). Due to the archaic nature of this word, the production may see it fit to replace all the script’s occurrences of *ecod* with *egad* (or a different interjection) or to eliminate the interjection altogether.

Ay or Aye: It is debated whether or not the utilization of the word *ay* to mean “yes” is appropriate in day-to-day conversation during the 1870’s. The word derives from the Middle English *ye and yie and was first introduced in 1576* (Merriam-Webster “aye”). In one of Juliet’s famous monologues in Act II, Scene II of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, she employs this word: “Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say ‘Ay,’ and I will take thy word” (*Romeo and Juliet*. 2.2.90-91). Therefore, the 1870 Virginia setting may call for the substitution of *ay* or *aye* with *yes* or *yes sir*.

Zounds: The word *zounds* in this script is used as a mild oath; however, it originated in 1597 as an English euphemism or oath meaning “by God’s wounds” (Merriam-Webster “zounds”). William Shakespeare utilizes this expression in *Richard III* when King Richard is surprised upon hearing Ratcliffe enter: “Zounds, who is there?” (*Richard III*. 5.3.209). Due to its British connotation, it may be advised to use an alternative interjection. For example, a southern interjection along a similar vein might be: *Good Lord!*

Alack: Though its use is sparse in the Goldsmith script, it is important to note that *alack* is another archaic Middle English word that originated in the fifteenth century used to express sorrow or regret (Merriam-Webster “alack”). For example, in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, Rosalind uses this phrase to express her anguish in Act IV, Scene III:

“Alack, in me what strange effect would they work in mild aspect?” (*As You Like It*. 4.3.51-52). It may be advantageous, for the sake of clear communication, to substitute a similar expression like *darn it* or *alas* for *alack*.

Anon: Oliver Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer* employs an antiquated usage of the term *anon*, meaning “at once; immediately” (Merriam-Webster “anon”). The term’s twelfth-century etymology derives from the Old English words *on ān*: *on* meaning *from* and *ān* meaning *one*. In Act II, Hastings says to Tony Lumpkin: “Well, what would you say to a friend that would take this bitter bargain off your hands?” and he responds with “Anon” (Goldsmith 39). Shakespearean character Iago also utilizes this word in *Othello* with the same denotation when he says: “Look you pale, mistress? Do you perceive the gastness of her eye? Nay, if you stare, we shall hear more anon” (*Othello*. 5.2.105-08). Therefore, it would be appropriate to substitute Tony’s line with something like *at once* or *right away* instead of the transcribed response.

Odso: The term is typically used as a mild oath or as an expression of surprise as is the case in *She Stoops to Conquer* (Merriam-Webster “odso”). In Voltaire’s *Candide*, the expression is employed for this purpose: “Odso! Said the Dutchman once more to himself, ‘thirty thousand piasters seem a trifle to this man’” (Voltaire Chapter 19). Due to its archaic nature, it may be appropriate to replace it with a different expression of surprise like *oh!* or *wow!*

Methinks: Another term deemed as archaic by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is *methinks*. Frequently employed by many of Shakespeare’s famous

works, the term means “it seems to me” and pre-dates the twelfth century (Merriam-Webster “methinks”). In Shakespeare’s play *Henry VI Part II*, it is used exactly in this context: “Here a’ comes, methinks, and the Queen with him. I’ll be the first, sure” (1.3.5-6). In order to stay true to the more modern time period, it would suffice to substitute the term with its definition or a variation thereof.

Post-chaise: *Post-chaise* is simply a specific way to refer to a carriage. In William H.G. Kingston’s *Marmaduke Merry*, it is used in this context: “Some days after, just as evening was approaching, a post chaise was seen slowly descending the winding road which led down to the cottage. (Kingston Chapter 16). This term frequently occurs within the text (Merriam-Webster “post chaise”). Therefore, it is up to the editor’s discretion whether or not to use the term *carriage* instead of *post-chaise* or to maintain the author’s original choice.

Scene Edit Suggestions

Act I, Scene I

Mrs. Hardcastle: “Ay, your times were fine times indeed; you have been telling us of them for many a long year. Here we live in an old rumbling mansion that looks for all the world like an inn, but that we never see company. Our best visitors are old Mrs. Oddfish, the Curate’s wife, and little Cripplegate, the lame dancing master, and all our entertainment your old stories of Prince Eugene and Duke of Marlborough” (Goldsmith 7). Liberty University’s production replaced *ay* with *yes* and *Prince Eugene* and *Duke of Marlborough* with *Colonel Stuart* and *Sallie Ward Armstrong*.

Mrs. Hardcastle: “Lord, Mr. Hardcastle, you’re clever at your Dorothy’s and your old wife’s. You may be a Darby, but I’ll be no Joan, I promise you. I’m not so old as you’d make me. . .” (Goldsmith 7). A reasonable edit would be to eliminate the Darby and Joan reference entirely.

Hardcastle: “There’s my pretty darling Kate! The fashions of the times have almost infected her too. By living a year or two in town, she is as fond of gauze and French frippery as the best of them” (Goldsmith 9). This reference to France in regard to fashion is historically-correct in this context; however, another option would be to substitute *French* with *New Orleans*.

Mr. Hardcastle: “Mr. Marlow, whom I have pitched upon, is the son of Sir Charles Marlow” (Goldsmith 10). Liberty University theatre director Neal Brasher substituted all occurrences within the script of *Sir Charles Marlow* with *Colonel Charles Marlow*.

Miss Neville: “It is a good-natured creature at bottom. . . Allons! Courage is necessary, as our affairs are critical” (Goldsmith 12). *Allons* is the first person plural imperative form of the French word *aller* meaning “to go!” (Etymonline “allons”). A suggestion would be to replace *allons* with *let’s go*.

Act I, Scene II

Tony’s Song (Second Stanza): “But when you come down with your pence, / For a slice of such scurvy religion, / I’ll leave it to all men of sense” (Goldsmith 14). Though the word *pence* here simply means multiple pennies, it does have a British association. In

order to avoid confusion, it may be suggested to replace the usage of *pence* with *cents* (Merriam Webster “pence”).

Shortly after Tony’s song, Stingo enters and warns Tony of two men approaching the door. Tony’s line following this news is: “As sure as can be, one of them must be the gentleman that’s coming down to court my sister” (Goldsmith 15). A person could allow this line to remain as such; however, the Liberty University 2017 production added the following lines:

TONY: . . . coming down to court my sister. Do they seem to be from
Richmond?

LANDLORD: I believe they may.

This addition is not vital, but it aids the clear communication of the new location to the audience.

The Landlord has the last line in Act I: “Ah, bless your heart, for a sweet—mischievous son of—no matter” (Goldsmith 18). This line is equally appropriate as it is humorous. However, the Liberty University 2017 production made a slight change to the script to add more of a southern flare to the ending of the Landlord’s line. They amended the ending to say “mischievous son of a gun” instead of “mischievous son of—no matter.”

Act II, Scene I

A featured servant, Diggory, has a line to Hardcastle stating: “Ay, mind how I hold them; I learned to hold my hands this way when I was upon drill for the militia”

(Goldsmith 20). A substitution suggestion would be: “Yes, mind how I hold them; I learned to hold my hands this way when I was upon drill for the army.”

A note for this scene and all subsequent scenes: the editor could consider eliminating the servants’ usage of “your worship” when addressing Hardcastle.

Shortly after Hardcastle exits, Diggory has a line that goes as follows: “Wouns! My place is gone clean out of my head” (Goldsmith 21). *Wouns* is another instance of archaic diction. One could consider the following substitution found in a different version of the script: “By the elevens, my place is gone quite out of my head.”

Hastings and Marlow enter, and Hastings mentions his surprise that Marlow, having traveled the world, has not found a women yet to marry. Marlow’s initial response is: “The Englishman’s malady” (Goldsmith 22). The editor should consider eliminating this statement for sake of clarity.

During Mr. Hardcastle’s introduction to Marlow and Hastings, he attempts to make them feel welcome by sharing historical war stories. This is a large portion that would need substitution in this context. I will include the script changes that Liberty University theatre director Neal Brasher made in the 2017 production:

HARDCASTLE. Your talking of a retreat, Mr. Marlow, puts me in mind of Stonewall Jackson, when he was moving up the Shenandoah Valley—

MARLOW. Don’t you think the waist coat will do with the plain brown?

HARDCASTLE. When the general moved his troops toward Front Royal.

HASTINGS. I think not: brown and yellow mix but very poorly.

HARDCASTLE. I say, gentleman, as I was telling you—

MARLOW. What, my good friend, if you gave us a glass of punch in the meantime; it would help us to carry on the Valley Campaign with vigor (see Appendix A, figure 4).

The script changes suggested above successfully replaced important British war figures and battles with American historical figures from The Civil War, accurately supporting the new setting.

Mr. Hardcastle engages in answering Hasting's questions, and he responds: "I do stir about a great deal, that's certain. Half the differences of the parish are adjusted in this very parlour" (Goldsmith 26). The editor could consider replacing *parish* with *county* or *state*.

A historical reference is made on page 27, when Hardcastle says: "Your generalship puts me in mind of Prince Eugene, when he fought the Turks at the battle of Belgrade" (Goldsmith 26). Liberty University theatre director Neal Brasher made the following edits to this line: "Your generalship puts me in mind of General Stuart, when he was at Brandy Station" (see Appendix A, figure 5). Then *Belgrade* was again substituted with *Brandy Station* in Marlow's subsequent line.

Another historical reference is found in Mr. Hardcastle's line on page 28 when Hardcastle speaks of his uncle. The Liberty University production replaced *Colonel Gunthorp* with *Colonel Wallop*.

In this scene, Mrs. Hardcastle refers to the fashions of the day with Hastings. She says, "There's nothing in this world I would love to talk of so much as London, and the fashions" (Goldsmith 35). Two editing suggestions would be to replace *London* with

either *New Orleans* or *France*. Both are appropriate; however, New Orleans may be the more dramatic choice due to the end of the line referring to the fact that she has never been there herself.

Hastings lists several places in England: Ranelagh, St. James's, and Tower Wharf. Consider eliminating entirely. Otherwise, one could replace these references with corresponding cities or counties in the appropriate location.

Similarly, Mrs. Hardcastle then lists more locations: the Pantheon, the Grotto Garden, and the Borough. The same suggestion as above applies here.

Mrs. Hardcastle's line: "All I can do is enjoy London at second-hand" (Goldsmith 35). One could substitute *London* with whichever place the editor chose above or simply utilize the pronoun *it*.

Act III, Scene I

Mr. Hardcastle's conversation with Kate consists primarily of him explaining to her the offensiveness of his encounter with Marlow. In the script, Hardcastle again references the Duke of Marlborough and his friend Brookes. In the Liberty University production, the director cut this monologue and Mr. Hardcastle simply stated: "He spoke to me as if he knew me all his life before; asked twenty questions, and never waited for an answer" (Goldsmith 41). If one were to desire to keep Mr. Hardcastle's monologue here, the editor should be sure to keep the references consistent throughout.

Mrs. Hardcastle, when addressing Constance, mentions a friend of hers, "Lady Kill-day-light" (Goldsmith 43). The editor could consider replacing *Lady* with *Mrs.* or *Miss*.

Kate addresses Marlow as the bar-maid for the first time (see Appendix B, figure 5), and he inquires about the “nectar of [her] lips” (Goldsmith 48). She pretends to be ignorant of his advancement, saying: “That’s a liquor there’s no call for in these parts. French, I suppose. We keep no French wines here, sir.” To which he responds: “Of true English growth, I assure you” (Goldsmith 48). Liberty University theatre director Neal Brasher appropriately replaced *French* with *northern* and *English* with *southern*.

Act IV

During Mr. Hardcastle’s tantrum, he begins listing items in his house that Marlow could take into his possession. Among the items he lists in the script is “The Rake’s Progress” (Goldsmith 53). This was a series of famous English paintings in the Georgian era. Though entirely appropriate for Goldsmith’s original audience, it doesn’t make much sense in this context. One could consider eliminating this reference entirely.

After Miss Hardcastle, still as the bar-maid, explains to Marlow her family situation, she says: “Because it puts me at a distance from one that, if I had a thousand pound, I would give it all to” (Goldsmith 55). The editor could consider replacing the word *pound* with *dollars*.

During Tony’s feigned flirtation with Constance, he admires her fingers that she “twists this way and that over the haspicholls, like a parcel of bobbins” (Goldsmith 57). The Liberty University production replaced *haspicholls* with *marigolds* and *bobbins* with *ribbons*.

Act V

During Tony's plot to reunite Constance and Hastings, Mrs. Hardcastle asks Tony where they are. Tony replies: "By my guess we should come upon Heavytree Heath, about forty miles from home" (Goldsmith 63). The Liberty University production changed this location name to *Lynchburg*, primarily due to the fact that the university itself is located in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Conclusion

Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* was written during a rich time in British history—marked by religious revival, political disappointments, and cultural and philosophical advancements. However, setting this production in Reconstruction-Era Virginia infuses the struggles of the English people with an even greater sense of turmoil. Therefore, it is possible to set this classic laughing comedy in the Reconstruction South. Not only is it possible, but it is profitable. The benefits that this new time period bring to the text, particularly in regard to the political discontentment and cultural animosity, far outweigh the script incongruities, including the necessary allusion and term substitutions. The major thematic element in Oliver Goldsmith's work is one that transcends time. Socio-economic discrimination and the economic value that is placed on romantic decision-making remains as relevant a topic for twenty-first century American audiences as it did for Georgian audiences.

The volume of ticket sales from Liberty University's production of *She Stoops to Conquer* was enhanced because of the audience's location in Lynchburg, Virginia. The setting of the play made it more relevant to the targeted audience. However, this nostalgia

for *The Old South* may be well-received in other states, as well. If the production company's audience is located in the North, theatre patrons will still be able to relate to the author's ultimate message: people are people—no matter their generation, culture, country, or income level.

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Unidentified soldier in Union uniform with saber and revolver in locket with chain of braided hair. Donated by Tom Liljenquist. Liljenquist Family Collection, 1861-1865. Photograph. Library of Congress, hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Figure 1. *Robert E. Lee*. Vic Arnold. June 22.

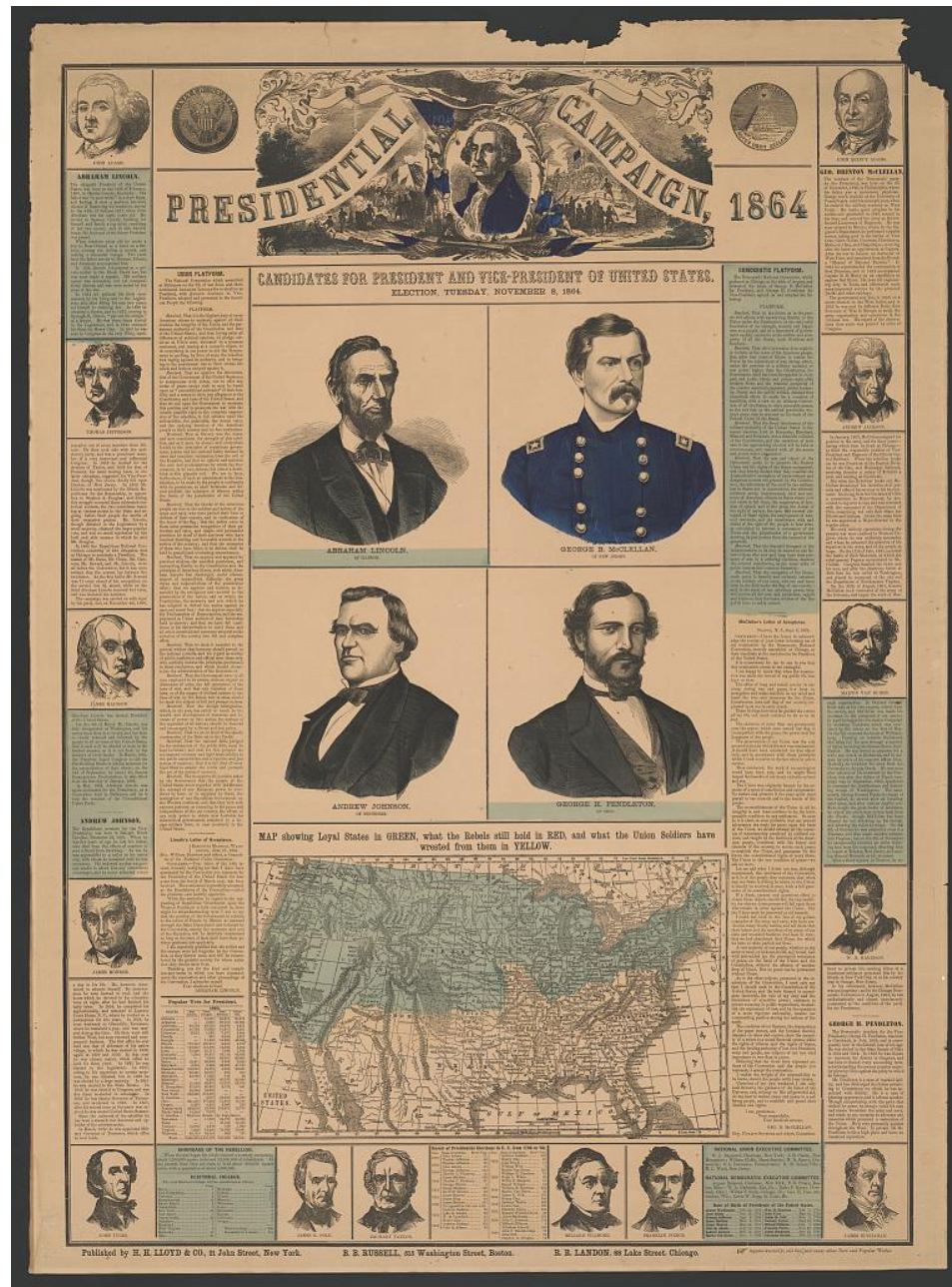


Figure 2. Candidates for President and Vice-President of United States Election,

Tuesday, November 8, 1864. H.H. Lloyd & Co



Figure 3. *Unidentified soldier in Union uniform with saber and revolver in locket with chain of braided hair.* Liljenquist, Tom. Between 1861 and 1865.



Figure 4. Stonewall Jackson. Library of Congress.



Figure 5. General Jeb Stuart J. Gurney & Son. Between 1861 and 1864.

Appendix B



Figure 1. *1541LR*. Cultural Expectations of Women. Liberty University. March 2017.



Figure 2. 1546LR. Socio-Economic Differences and *The Mob*. Liberty University.

March 2017.



Figure 3. *1552LR*. Hierarchical Servanthood Roles. Liberty University. March 2017.



Figure 4. *1559LR*. Fashion in the Nineteenth Century. Liberty University. March 2018.



Figure 5. 1570LR. Kate Hardcastle Appearing in “Maid” Attire. Liberty University.

March 2017.



Figure 6. *1582LR*. Mr. Hardcastle Allows Children to Break the Socio-Economic Marital Norm. Liberty University. March 2017.