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*Binghamton University--SUNY*

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BEFORE CRENSHAW: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LOOK AT  
INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY IN THREE TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
AMERICAN PLAYS BY EATON, GRIMKÉ, AND TREADWELL

BY

EMILY GOODELL

BA American University 2013

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Masters of Theatre in Theory and Criticism  
in the Graduate School of  
Binghamton University  
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Andrew Walkling, Graduate Chair  
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

David Bisaha, Faculty Advisor  
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Barbara Wolfe, Member  
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Anne Brady, Member  
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Tom Kremer, Member  
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

## Abstract

This thesis anachronistically applies Kimberle Crenshaw's term *intersectionality* to three dramatic texts using Thomas Postlewait's model of theatre historiography. These plays were authored by twentieth century female playwrights who had similar intersectional lives as the leads discussed. Yuki from the 1901 novel turned 1903 Broadway play *A Japanese Nightingale* was crafted by Winnifred Eaton. Yuki's identity will be the subject of the first chapter. The second chapter examines the identity of Rachel from Angelina Weld Grimke's anti-lynching play *Rachel*. For the third chapter, the identities of both female leads from *Hope for a Harvest* by Sophie Treadwell are analyzed. Each chapter will also investigate the strong autobiographical ties the playwrights have to their material in terms of intersectional identity and historical context.

Dedicated to  
Winnifred Eaton  
Angelina Weld Grimké  
Sophie Treadwell  
and women creators around the world

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the professors in Binghamton University Theatre Department for their guidance and support. Thank you to Professor Benita Roth who graciously allowed me into her sociology class that proved instrumental in my education. I would like to thank Assistant Professor David Bisaha for his extraordinary mentorship throughout this process.

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## Introduction

This thesis will examine the lead female characters in three separate plays. The first is Yuki from *A Japanese Nightingale* by Winnifred Eaton. The second is Rachel in Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel*. And the third is shared by the two leading female roles of *Hope for a Harvest* by Sophie Treadwell, Lotta and Tonie. These characters will be examined under a sociological lens using a theatre historiographical method.

The research was done using Thomas Postlewait's model of theatre historiography as described in his text titled *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*.<sup>1</sup> In reconstructing these three productions as significant events in theatre history, the event itself was placed at the center of the study. The playwrights, shown in the model as agents, and the context that they were working in, here called Possible Worlds, create a triangle (Figure 1) with the productions to identify how they were sculpted by playwright/world. This model, called hermeneutical triangles<sup>2</sup>, will also allow the plays to enter a specific place in the theatre history canon—plays for social change.

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<sup>1</sup> Postlewait, Thomas. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*. Cambridge Introductions to Literature. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> 10231466, "Historiography | Current Issues in Drama, Theatre & Performance." This site contains the figure above

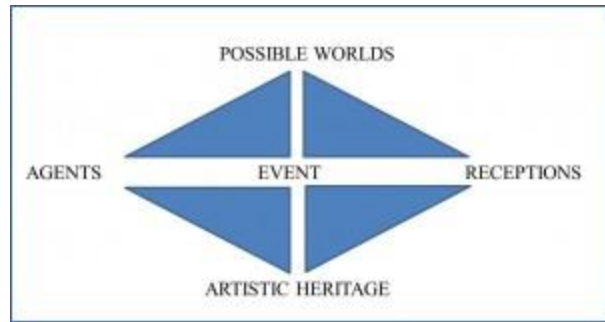
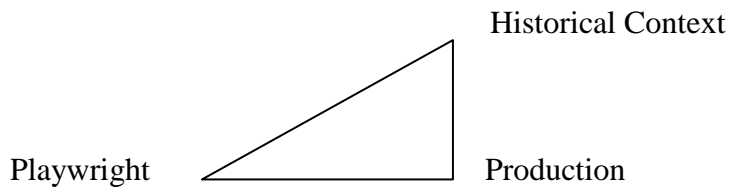


Figure 1

For this thesis, the upper left portion of the model will be used as my method of research. My focus will remain inside this structure. In this case, the model's headings will read as follows:



This model will be used to round out the event, what it looked like, how it functioned, who saw it, where it was, how it was received, etc. The agent and the world will work as equal forces enacting upon the event and how/why it was constructed and received as it was. This will help to balance the autonomy of the creator and the mold that is the creator's environment.<sup>3</sup>

At the center of this model is the Event or in the case of this thesis, the production. Possible Worlds is the historical context. The Agent is the playwright who has the ultimate agency in constructing the dramatic text and given circumstances for the characters of the event. In order to reconstruct the production, this model has been adapted slightly. The Receptions are the reviews and criticisms of the production which

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<sup>3</sup> Postlewait, Thomas. "The Idea of the "political" in Our Histories of Theatre: Texts, Contexts, Periods, and Problems." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 12, no. 3 (2002): 10.

are the historian's eyes when reconstructing the ephemerality of theatre. Since the pieces detailed in this thesis were performed before common recording devices, the Receptions will aid the Event/Production, painting the picture of stages that no longer exist. Through the reviews of the productions, technical aspects such as the costumes, sets, and even actor's ability can be revealed one hundred years later. The reviews also act as a politicizing factor of the production, outlining the responses of audiences/theatre critics during the early 20th century.

Not all criticisms were good representations of the performances, nor can historical context be the singular guide to politicizing the body of the actor or the respective audience. With the balance of the hermeneutic triangle, this approach will help flesh out the political nature of these productions. Postlewait outlines the many areas of theatre wherein politics lie in his article "The Idea of the 'Political' in our Histories of Theatre". "Politics can be located in the social and economic organization of theatre itself, ... in society itself... in the reception rather than the production of the art work..." all of which will be addressed in the chapters to follow.<sup>4</sup>

Each play is a container for an ideological debate that is carried out in three different dialogues surrounding comparable issues. These dramatic texts are tied together by the similarity of their intersectional thematic constructions which were formulated by authoresses who desired a discourse of identity politics. This interaction between playwright and audience places the agency onstage with the characters as political presentations of the intersectional self as theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

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<sup>4</sup> Postlewait *Cambridge Introduction*. 26-27.

Intersectionality was conceived by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her essay “Mapping the Margins”, originally printed in *Stanford Law Review* in 1980. “Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling.”<sup>5</sup> Crenshaw was advocating against the “either/or proposition”, encouraging readers to examine the self as both, which is the crux of intersectionality. *Intersectionality* is the crossroads which every person stands on as an identity; the figurative four-way stop connecting an individual’s race, class, gender, and sexuality. To understand completely the productions in question, one must not hesitate to apply intersectionality “anachronistically” since each playwright engaged with and rallied for all aspects of identity and placed them centerstage. For this thesis, I will use the following definition:

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.<sup>6 7</sup>

I will be using Postlewait’s historiographical structure for research and construction through the critical lens of Crenshaw’s identity theory. The primary focus will be on the leading roles of the intersectional characters. The intersectional identities

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<sup>5</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle Williams. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. (Women of Color at the Center: Selections from the Third National Conference on Women of Color and the Law)." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241.

<sup>6</sup> Crenshaw 1241.

<sup>7</sup> Intersectionality is also defined as the complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect. "New Words: Intersectionality." Merriam-Webster. April 2017. Accessed November 13, 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/intersectionality-meaning>.

of the playwrights will also impact this study. How did they formulate these identities for the stage? How did these three women create an American socio-political debate within individual characters, specifically women? These questions will help to fill in the three points of Postlewait's triangle; Possible Worlds, the historical context of American identity politics and theatre, and Agents, the autobiographical effect of the playwrights.

*A Japanese Nightingale*, written first as a novel by Winnifred Eaton in 1901 then adapted for the stage in 1903 will be the first case study outlined. Yuki, the leading lady, as well as Kayo, are representative of turn of the century racial politics.<sup>8</sup> Chapter one will explore the authenticity of Eaton's identity as well as the domestic structure of exoticism her character of Yuki posed to the audience. Yuki's intersectional characterization onstage will be argued through critiques and reviews of both the play and the original novel.

The second play is *Rachel* by Angelina Weld Grimké. The titular character Rachel embodies a modern woman in this play which has been categorized as an anti-lynching play of the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>9</sup> Her struggles with domestic life, employment, and the prospect of marriage make her the ideal candidate for an early representation of intersectionality. Grimké places her autobiographical racial identity into Rachel's character which presented the audience with an identity structure that confronted racial misconceptions of the day.

The final play was written later than the first two, however its seeds were planted in the decades before it. Written first as a novel in the early 1930's, *Hope for a Harvest*

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<sup>8</sup> "Life's Confidential Guide to The Theatres." *Life* (1883-1936) 42, no. 1104 (Dec 24, 1903): 652.

<sup>9</sup> Hull, Gloria T.

did not open on Broadway until 1941. Sophie Treadwell's final performed play presented a pair of unmarried women surviving the Dust Bowl. Laced with autobiographical details, the characters of Carlotta Thatcher and Antoinette Martin are familiar roles in Treadwell's canon, particularly Antoinette who is treated as the "half-breed."<sup>10</sup>

The three plays selected for this thesis are intriguingly similar in their intersectionality. Themes of poverty, multi-ethnicity, feminism, and heteronormative deviance<sup>11</sup> combine in each of these productions within the lead female character. In this thesis, the term "biracial" is used to describe the racial/ethnic composition of Eaton, Grimké, and their counterparts Yuki and Rachel since they had two distinct racial identities within themselves. Treadwell and her counterparts Lotta and Tonie will be described as "multi-ethnic" because Treadwell identifies both herself and Tonie with at least four separate heritages. The plays were authored by feminists<sup>12</sup> struggling with similar concerns across the first half of the 20th century. Therefore, this thesis will combine Crenshaw and Postlewait to examine each agent and event using an intersectional lens that encourages an anachronistic reading.

These three plays were conceptualized and executed by politicized bodies. The authoresses, producers, and actors were all individual agents working with three dramatic

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<sup>10</sup> Mantle, Burns. "Fredrich March Star in 'Hope For A Harvest'." *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, December 7, 1941. <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1941/12/07/page/160/article/fredric-march-star-in-hope-for-a-harvest>.

<sup>11</sup> This term is one that I use for any behavior that goes against gender/relationship roles in society. It allows me to encompass the numerous differences that the characters and playwrights have in their roles without becoming specific to the point of exclusion. For example, playwright Angelina Weld Grimké wrote homosexual poetry which is a form of heteronormative deviance. Sophie Treadwell was married however did not live with her husband, which is also a form of heteronormative deviance.

<sup>12</sup> Feminism is defined by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. TEDxTalks. "We should all be feminists | Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie | TEDxEuston." YouTube. April 12, 2013. Accessed June 14, 2017. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU\\_qWc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc).

texts that questioned societal conceptions of race, gender, sexuality and class. Their bodies, particularly those of the playwrights and actors, were inscribed with societal prejudice by the audience. The reconstruction of each production will examine how the productions, the playwrights, and the environment created and represented intersectional characters.

This approach also alters the legacy of these productions. Theatre historians have placed these dramatic texts in boxes that do not complete the full impact of these groundbreaking plays. For example, stating that *Rachel* is an anti-lynching piece is a disservice to Grimké since the play addresses poverty, sexuality, and gender as well as race. Only by allowing the application of intersectionality can we fully understand the political and social ramifications of the productions on the theatrical community as well as their place in history.



## **Chapter 1 A Japanese Nightingale**

Every romantic comedy needs a little twist to keep it from being overly clichéd. A foreign country, a local lady, maybe a murder, all help to make it interesting. *A Japanese Nightingale* by Onoto Watanna took the audience to exotic Japan in 1903. It had all of these elements alongside something unique: a lead female character whose identity would be acknowledged now as “intersectional”. Based on the book by the same name written by Winnifred Eaton in 1901, *A Japanese Nightingale* presented Broadway with the intersectional character of Yuki. In this chapter, Yuki’s conflict with personal identity issues surrounding poverty, biracialism, and sexuality will demonstrate her intersectionality. I will also illustrate the correlation between the author and Yuki, how the intersectional identity is displayed in the novel as well as the play, and finally how the intersectionality was diluted by production, yet did not disappear.

### **Playwright**

Winnifred Eaton was born to Grace and Edward in French Canada. Edward was an Englishman who married Grace, a Chinese woman. Winnifred was placed in a societal box when she was born a “half-caste”, as she would later write.<sup>13</sup> She and her thirteen siblings lived in poverty, combating smallpox, overcrowding, and lack of education. On the streets of Montreal, she was called all manner of hateful things due to her appearance

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<sup>13</sup> Watanna, Onoto. *“A Half Caste” and Other Writings*. Asian American Experience. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

as a biracial child. This was the first acknowledgement that Eaton, as well as her siblings, was different.

Eaton's identity as an impoverished "yellow" girl was not one of her own construction; rather Canada, like the United States had taken measures against the influx of Chinese immigrants in the late 19th century by outlawing citizenship for anyone of Chinese heritage. The Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882<sup>14</sup> in the United States was followed by the Canadian response, The Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. These xenophobic pieces of legislation legally institutionalized systemic hatred of Chinese persons. The "Yellow Peril", the "plague" of mass Asian immigration that "threatened" the white population of North America, was in full swing.

That did not prevent the precocious daughters of Grace and Edward from becoming pioneers in their own right. Edith, Winnifred's eldest sister, aspired to writing from an early age. She became known as one of the first Asian American<sup>15</sup> authors due to her strict adherence to her Chinese identity. This point is crucial to Edith and her success as she took on a nom de plume: Sui Sin Far. Winnifred's granddaughter, Diana Birchall, later became her biographer and detailed the twelve other siblings' paths. Most disavowed their Chinese half in order to hold jobs, gain entry to all-white clubs, and marry, all of which were difficult for a person appearing to be Asian.<sup>16</sup> Edith and Winnifred had grander plans.

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<sup>14</sup> Perrin, Linda. *Coming to America: Immigrants from the Far East*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1980. 40.

<sup>15</sup> Knowles, Valerie. *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006*. Rev. ed. Toronto; Tonawanda, NY: Dundurn, 2007. 74.

<sup>16</sup> Birchall, Diana. *Onoto Watanna: The Story of Winnifred Eaton*. Asian American Experience. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001. 26.

While Edith wrote extensively about the Chinese struggle in Canada and the Americas, Winnifred's image of success was quite different from Edith's propaganda but also carved space for Asian women. The two of them embarked on a journey of a lifetime: they took a boat from Montreal to their new posts at a newspaper in Jamaica. The colonial caste system of the island was still an integral part of the island's societal infrastructure and had a deep effect on Winnifred which is described in her first novel. Birchall believes with good reason that Eaton's first book *Me* is nearly autobiographical, and references the events that the main character Nora endures as though Winnifred experienced the same.<sup>17</sup> This projection seems plausible considering every plot point in *Me* lines up with the historical facts of Winnifred's personal life including employment as a stenographer in Chicago and her early start in the predominately black country of Jamaica. Birchall cites Winnifred's misgivings about Jamaica using *Me* stating that Winnifred claimed just as Nora did "to have seen only one black person in her life before- in church, when an older sister told her he was the 'Bogy man'".<sup>1819</sup> If this is true, Winnifred had the shock of her life in Jamaica. The exposure to open racial hatred and a distinct caste system based on darkness of skin altered Winnifred's thoughts about racial identity. This is evident in her writing. After her Jamaican adventure, she did not directly reference her personal race unless it was to lie. Jamaica had the opposite effect on her

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<sup>17</sup> Watanna, Onoto. *Me, a Book of Remembrance*. Nineteenth Century Collections Online (NCCO): Women: Transnational Networks. New York: Century, 1915.

<sup>18</sup> Birchall 32.

<sup>19</sup> Watanna, *Me*. 19.

sister Edith, who wrote ever more fervently and was eventually canonized as “The First Chinese-American Fiction Author.”<sup>20</sup>

Winnifred Eaton’s identity inhibited her greatly. She wrote under a pseudonym just like her sister, however she took a different approach in order to avoid the racial backlash against “Chinamen”. Eaton chose a Japanese-esque pen name, altering her identity from half-Chinese half-English to one of assumed Japanese identity. Onoto Watanna was the name she concocted when she settled in Chicago to write and work as a stenographer.<sup>21</sup> This is where she wrote the bulk of *A Japanese Nightingale*, her greatest success. Once she published the book in 1901, Watanna took another leap and moved to the cultural capital of the world: New York City.

Watanna’s claimed Japanese heritage allowed her book to do well, selling over 200,000 copies.<sup>22</sup> Her commercial success was due in part to the marketability of Japanese Orientalism. Orientalism was commodified for the middle class through the cheap goods the Industrial Revolution generated, including clothing, lamps, fans, triptych screens, and other household items imprinted with cherry blossoms and small Asian figures.<sup>23</sup> Watanna knowingly utilized the exoticism for her romantic novel, marketing it with gilt edges and a silk cover embossed with flowers and birds. Each page had an illustration drawn by Genjiro Yeto, a critically acclaimed Japanese artist, creating an

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<sup>20</sup> Teng, Emma Jinhua. "The Eaton Sisters and the Figure of the Eurasian." In *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature*, 88-103. Cambridge University Press, 2016. 88.

<sup>21</sup> Birchall 54.

<sup>22</sup> Birchall 75.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, Josephine. “Stage Orientalism and Asian American Performance from the Nineteenth into the Twentieth Century”. In *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature*, 55-70. Cambridge University Press, 2016. 55.

objet d'art of the book itself. As a commodity, the novel was a product of its time, a sensational romantic drama in an exotic land.

The commercial success of the novel led to several other novels in the same vein; *Wooring of Wisteria*, *Miss Nume*, and *Lady of Lavender* all capitalized on the authority Watanna claimed over Japanese cultural heritage. These texts have led to a debate over the authenticity of identity with regard to Watanna's authorship. As a biracial woman without Japanese heritage who had never set foot in Japan, Watanna has been denounced as an imposter whereas Sui Sin Far has been edified by scholars. Emma Jinhua Teng wrote a discursive essay titled "The Eaton sisters and the Figure of the Eurasian"<sup>24</sup> which focuses on this question of authenticity. Teng makes the argument that the Eaton sisters collectively created works that were "apologia for the Eurasian".<sup>25</sup> Yes, the miscegenation<sup>26</sup> drama highlights the ethnic makeup of the characters; however, I believe that Winnifred Eaton was attempting to create a space for "half-breeds" to be viewed as whole humans with a distinct set of problems in Western society, not to be creatures of sympathy. Each of Watanna's leading characters grapples with identity, specifically a biracial heritage that is in direct conflict with society.

This chapter will examine the character of Yuki in *A Japanese Nightingale*. Yuki has defining traits that suggest a strong correlation to Eaton's personal life and struggles. The

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<sup>24</sup> Eurasian was the term used by both Edith Eaton and Winnifred Eaton to speak about their biracial heritage as half European and half Asian. Caucasian is defined by Merriam Webster- "used especially in reference to persons of European descent having usually light skin pigmentation. "Definition of CAUCASIAN."

<sup>25</sup> Teng 90.

<sup>26</sup> Miscegenation was the term used by lawmakers in the United States that prohibited interracial marriage. This thesis will use this term for the express purpose of illuminating the legal implications of the actions of the characters, as well as to highlight the absurdity of archaic racist terminology.

presentation of Yuki as an intersectional identity in the novel was taken directly from the inscription society placed on Eaton's identity. The later transcription of Yuki into the Broadway play alters the identity politics at the heart of Eaton's intent in the novel and is the result of commercialized cultural antagonism. Yuki in the play does not carry the same racial composition as in the novel due to the production team's elimination of Yuki's biracial element. This debate will be presented in the Analysis section of this chapter.

### **The Novel**

*A Japanese Nightingale*, printed in 1901, is set in the Empire of Japan, lending a mysticism that Americans craved in the late 19th century and into the early 20th century called Japonisme or Orientalism. The story on those gilt trimmed pages had all the elements of a romance of the time, but the main character did not adhere to societal norms.

The story follows Yuki<sup>27</sup>, a young woman whose family goes bankrupt putting their son through an American university. The patriarchal head of the family has died, leaving Yuki and her mother unable to sell the house since women at the time could not own or sell property. So, Yuki and her mother turn to other methods of income, primarily farming. Farming proves unsustainable and Yuki sacrifices herself by becoming an entertainer, dancing in tea gardens across the main island of Japan. Finally, their financial woes forced Yuki to her last resort: marriage. She marries an American businessman, thinking he will leave her someday and thus free her of a necessary, temporary bond. Her sacrifice was dutiful, honorable, and admirable, but most importantly it was through her

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<sup>27</sup> Japanese for "snowflake", a delicate and unique item of beauty that is ephemeral.

personal autonomy and ability to manipulate her wealthy husband that Yuki was successful. The love story that ensues is a typical romance, with a twist: Yuki's now educated brother Taro is good friends with her new husband Jack. Taro has a great shock when he discovers the financial ruin his mother and sister kept from him and how his best friend had taken his sister as a wife. Taro dies of guilt with Jack at his side. Yuki runs away from her family, only to be reunited with her husband two years later. The couple vows to never leave each other again.<sup>28</sup>

Though what she wrote was advertised as a tale of lovers who overcome socio-economic differences (the common Aschenputtel<sup>29</sup> trope) with an exotic setting, Eaton twists the narrative using the rebellious Yuki. Eaton places an intersectional female protagonist at its heart who is based on her own life experiences. Eaton uses her own success as a foreign woman of color as a mirror for Yuki's ambition. Yuki was infused with elements of Eaton's identity in order to tell a truthful story of intersectionality. Eaton grew up poor in Montreal; Yuki's family became poor after the death of her father. Both women generated their own incomes by their own means: Eaton wrote novels and serials for newspapers and Yuki danced and sang for wealthy patrons. A woman earning her own income instead of through marriage was unusual for the middle to upper classes. Yuki's strength and entrepreneurial spirit saves her family from ruin. Eaton's paycheck generated enough income that she was able to send money home to her many brothers

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<sup>28</sup> Watanna, Onoto. *A Japanese Nightingale*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1901. Binghamton University Special Collections.

<sup>29</sup> Aschenputtel, The Grimm Brother's original Cinderella, has become a Western plot construct wherein a poor girl marries a wealthy man of stature. Grimm, Jacob, Grimm, Wilhelm, and Tatar, Maria. *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004. 113.

and sisters, supporting her family through her art just as Yuki does.

### **Identity in the Characters in the Novel**

The intersectional identity of Yuki within the context of the novel is undeniable. Her character is that of a poor, biracial geisha. These combined factors in the novel drive Yuki to make decisions for herself and for her family. Her appearance, social class (which shifts), and gendered role also influence the external loci in Yuki's life, such as how others treat her and what employment she may obtain.

Yuki was low on the totem pole of Japanese society despite her noble birth. The miscegenation of her parents, a Japanese mother of a higher class and her foreign English father, is a significant facet of Yuki's identity. Her body is politicized through visual semiotics read by other characters and indeed the reader. Yuki's biracialism appears to be the ultimate concern since it created an "unreliable creature, alien at this country, alien at your honorable country, augustly despicable- a half-caste!" (sic)<sup>31</sup> Yuki was condemned by the public as foreign within her own country. Efforts to conform to her culture through appearance wearing rich fabrics and bright kimonos did nothing to conceal the color of her blue eyes. It is suggested in the novel that she used a dark oil to dye her red hair, but could not completely conceal the red waves.<sup>32</sup>

Let us examine the exact wording Eaton uses to describe her leading character. In this scene, Yuki has danced "The Storm Dance" for a small group that includes her future love and husband Jack Bigelow. When Jack asks the proprietor of the tea garden who the dancer was, the proprietor scoffs and offers this reply:

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<sup>31</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 14.

<sup>32</sup> Watanna *Nightingale*. 23.



Beautiful excellencies! Phow! You cannot see properly in the deceitful light of this honorable moon. A cheap girl of Tokyo with the blue-glass eyes of the barbarian, the yellow skin of the lower Japanese, the hair of mixed color, black and red, the form of a Japanese courtesan, and the heart and nature of those honorably unreliable creatures!<sup>33</sup> (sic)

The man's disdain for biracial women is noted and he continues by exclaiming that they are alien in both countries they could claim heritage within. Note that this is the man who hired Yuki in the first place. As a Japanese man, he calls her eyes, "the blue eyes of the barbarian", alerting the audience to the deep-seated hatred from both sides. It also allows the burden of belonging to rest on Yuki, who is ambiguous enough to raise doubt on both sides. This particular struggle of appearance is questioned later by Jack when he speaks to Yuki in person.

"You are Japanese?" he finally asked, to make sure.

She nodded.

"I thought so, and yet—"

She smiled. ....

"You see- your eyes and hair" he began again. She nodded and dimpled and he knew she understood.<sup>34</sup>

In this little scene, a white American male is grappling with the outward appearance of a Eurasian. He "asked, to make sure" leading the reader to assume that this is questionable—that Yuki could appear to be Caucasian. A more detailed description of her hair is on pages twenty-two and twenty-three:

"A tawny, rebellious mass of hair, which was never meant to be worn smoothly... Never before had he seen such hair. It was black, though not densely so, for all over it, even where it had been darkened with oil, there was a red tinge, and it was

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<sup>33</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 25.

luxuriously thick and long and wavy.”<sup>35</sup>

The oil described would have had a dual purpose: to smooth hair and to darken it. This is similar to black walnut trees which were used in the Eastern United States at the time of Eaton’s writings for the same purpose.

Yuki’s life is transformed by Jack Bigelow. Jack’s role in the novel defies the gender stereotypes that Eaton ascribed to white Western men. She explains this within her narrative on page seventeen as she describes how Jack is different from the other foreign men who come to Japan. “He would not append his name to the long list of foreigners who for a short, happy, and convenient season cheerfully take unto themselves Japanese wives, and with the same cheerfulness desert them.”<sup>36</sup> These marriages were of convenience according to Eaton, which is why she emphasizes the validity of Jack and Yuki’s union later in the text. Yuki offhandedly remarks upon a future time when she believes Jack will leave her. He adamantly denies that he will. Taro reinforces the idea of the convenient marriage, desiring to eliminate the practice of miscegenation since it leaves Japanese women without their foreign husbands to bear the shame of desertion as well as biracial children. Growing up with a single mother and facing the social stigma of “half-breeds” in the late 1800’s would have been difficult. Eaton continues on page seventeen with Yuki’s brother’s sentiments: “Taro held that the Eurasian was born a sorrowful lot, and was bitterly opposed to the union of women of his country with men of

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<sup>35</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 22, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 17.

other lands, particularly as he was westernized enough to appreciate how lightly such marriages were held by foreigners.”<sup>37</sup>

Eaton delivers to her readers a successful interracial marriage, one that may have been modeled after her own parents who remained married until death. Eaton was writing at a time when interracial marriages were uncommon, and men controlled every aspect of a woman’s life, which makes Yuki’s autonomy unique. Her willingness to run away from Jack, and then for Jack to seek her for two years is an unusual plot for the time. In the final pages, Jack outlines how he will take Yuki to America for a brief time, presumably to acquaint her with his family. Then the couple will return to Japan to remain for the rest of their lives. Jack is idealized as a rescuer as he chases an exotic woman that he loves who is in financial ruin. It also provides a progressive alternative for the audience who may have had the mindset of Yuki’s brother Taro. Taro’s mindset was spelled out in the novel and in the play; Western marriages, particularly to Asian women, were not to be desired. The success of Yuki and Jack in their “unconventional” love creates a space for that love to exist in text. Eaton named that chapter “East and West United”. ““We are wed-ed for ever an’ ever’ ‘Yes, forever,’ he repeated. THE END.”<sup>38</sup> (sic)

### **Play**

The script to the play has been lost to time. However, reviews are able to fill in the picture through the critiques of James Metcalfe, Alan Dale, and several others writing in 1903. According to *The New York Times*, *Nightingale* opened in Daly’s Theatre on

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<sup>37</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 17, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 297.

November 19, 1903, to a “large, obviously friendly” audience that was “quite ready to applaud”.<sup>39</sup> It ran just over a month until December 30, 1903.

This reviewer states that “a considerable expense had been involved in this production”. This review was from opening night of *Nightingale* and was printed the next day under the headline “A Japanese Nightingale: Dramatized Novel at Daly’s Has Rich Trimmings”. The reviewer also states that the drama utilized “the rich resource of modern stagecraft” across three acts that had scenic changes within each act.

The second scene of the first act, showing a road to Tokio, with a wide sweep of land, the trees overhung with wistaria; the second scene of the third act- the temple of Shiba- with a massive effect of lacquer and gold, and another scene in which sacred Fuji Yama was perceptible in the distance, rearing its lofty peak from amid a misty expanse of cloud.<sup>40</sup>

The Oriental styling of the production was poorly done, however, according to a number of reviewers. A Japanese viewer commented on the production as “a mess” stating that no Japanese person would own such items as those presented in *Nightingale*.<sup>41</sup> Another review details the cheapness of the kimonos worn by the actresses, stating that the industrialization of clothing had destroyed the meaning of the kimonos by American machinery.<sup>42</sup> These comments reinforce that the identity of Japan was constructed by Eaton/Young, neither of which had Japanese heritage or even had

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<sup>39</sup> “A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly’s Has Rich Trimmings. It’s Old-Fashioned Melodrama, However, Along Well-Tried Lines -- Audience Applauded Freely.” Accessed November 19, 2017. <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A04EFD91039E333A25753C2A9679D946297D6CF>.

<sup>40</sup> “A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly’s.”

<sup>41</sup> “A Jap Artist Sees ‘A Japanese Nightingale’”. Sunday Telegram. Nov 29, 1903.

<sup>42</sup> “A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly’s.”

been to Japan. The Broadway façade failed to authentically replicate Japan for the audience.

### **Broadway 1903**

After enjoying relative commercial success as a novel, producer heavyweights Erlanger and Klaw signed William Young to dramatize the work.<sup>43</sup> Young had previously dramatized several novels, including a popular run of *Ben Hur*.<sup>44</sup> Asian dramas were popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with at least three similar productions in 1903 alone, therefore it is no wonder that Erlanger and Klaw wanted in on the action. *The Jewel of Asia*, *Otoyo/Japan By Night*, *Darling of the Gods*, and *A Japanese Nightingale* were four plays performed with entirely white casts on dramatic sets designed to evoke Japan.<sup>45</sup> They all went up in 1903 on Broadway, each with varying success.

*The Darling of the Gods* ran at the Belasco Theatre. Opening for a returning run a month before *Nightingale*'s opening (September 16, 1903), this Orientalist piece was called by Metcalfe an "elaborately staged Japanese tragedy" a significantly more favorable review than the one he gave *Nightingale*.<sup>46</sup> Ironically, this review was about a David Belasco play that was undergoing a lawsuit. Eaton, then Mrs. Babcock, was suing Belasco for stealing the plot from her novel *Wooing of Wisteria* to create *The Darling of the Gods*.<sup>47</sup> Belasco is cited as the author of the five-act drama alongside a John Luther

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<sup>43</sup> "Theatrical Jottings." *The New York Herald*, August 20, 1903. Image. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Accessed November 20, 2017. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83030313/1903-08-20/ed1/?q=a+japanese+nightingale&sp=9>.

<sup>44</sup> Metcalfe, "Article 8 -- No Title." 20.

<sup>45</sup> Metcalfe, "Article 5 -- No Title." *Life (1883-1936)* 42, no. 1096 (Oct 29, 1903): 410.

<sup>46</sup> Metcalfe. "Article 5 -- no Title." 410.

<sup>47</sup> Birchall 81.

Long with incidental music by William Hurst.<sup>48</sup> The same Japanese artist who illustrated Eaton's novel, Genjiro Yeto, was the artist who sketched the costumes for Belasco. Eaton lost the suit against Belasco that year.

David Belasco also offers insight into Erlanger as a producer. Belasco goes after the producer of *Nightingale*, Erlanger, calling him a mogul. Erlanger, according to Belasco, was only in theatre for the money.<sup>49</sup> This falls in line with my analysis that the Americanization of the plot and dismantling of the novel's original intent were decisions made by men attempting to exploit Eaton's successful novel. As tragedy struck Klaw and Erlanger in Chicago<sup>50</sup>, their Oriental melodrama was closing due to a saturation in the Broadway market of Asian-inspired plays. *Nightingale* closed on December 30, 1903.<sup>51</sup>

James Metcalfe, an established New York City theatre critic, reviewed the production several times in *Life*. He cited the cheapness of the production, the lack of Japanese-ness, and the inability of the actors. This is in direct contradiction with the review in the *New York Times*. The reviewer agreed that it was not a good play, however the scenery was far beyond Metcalfe's cheap description. "Rich scenery and rich costumes, music that is pleasing to the ear and dancing that delights the eye, does not constitute drama."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "The Darling of the Gods – Broadway Play – Original | IBDB."

<sup>49</sup> "Drama." *Life (1883-1936)* 45, no. 1173 (Apr 20, 1905): 462.

<sup>50</sup> Klaw and Erlanger were fronting another production nearly three thousand miles away in Chicago simultaneously to their production in New York. They had taken the production from New York City, which had run from January to May, to the Iroquois Theatre in Chicago. *Mr. Blue Beard* was slated as a children's musical and sold out a performance on December 30, 1903, closing day of *Nightingale* in New York City. The fire that destroyed the performance killed over six hundred patrons and forced Klaw and Erlanger to shell out large sums of money in compensation. "Drama."

<sup>51</sup> "Life's Confidential Guide to The Theatres."

<sup>52</sup> "A Japanese *Nightingale*." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Nov. 20, 1903.

Onoto Watanna's story was transferred from its bindings to a richly lacquered box, decorated with abundant color, and illuminated with much of the rich resource of modern stagecraft, was made visible for the first time last evening at Daly's Theatre before an audience which was large, obviously friendly, and quite ready to applaud.<sup>53</sup> (sic)

This review shows how different critics interpreted the extent of authenticity and what was important in fashioning the identity of Japan. The *Times* argued that the scenery, music, and dancing were "pleasing" however, it did not compensate for the lack of skill in the dramatic sense. These differing opinions demonstrate the difficulty in determining authenticity and what it means to an audience.

### **Identity through Staged Characters**

From the reviews, one can piece together what was similar between the novel and Young's dramatization. It is evident that the characters had analogous relations to each other—Yuki and Taro were brother and sister who shared a Japanese mother. The play names the mother character Kayo. The marriage broker called Ido Nakodo was also included as was Jack Bigelow the American businessman. A number of characters were added, but one character remains elusive; Mekko of the Imperial Counsel is mentioned briefly however it is unclear what this role did to the plot of the play. There is no mention of the character in the reviews or in the novel, which suggests that Mekko was not a major role if unremarked upon.<sup>54</sup>

This play was included in this thesis due to the debate that lies in the construction of Yuki's character in the play. With the novel's explicit implications regarding Yuki's biracial appearance, it may come as a surprise that Young, or the costume designer, or

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<sup>53</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale." *New York Times*.

<sup>54</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale – Broadway Play – Original | IBDB."

any number of people working on the performance, altered Yuki drastically. Mary Illington was the white actress who played Yuki in yellow face, a common practice through the 1970's.<sup>55</sup> Illington "makes herself attractive"<sup>56</sup> according to Metcalfe, but fails at being "a Japanese" for other reviewers.<sup>5758</sup> She is described with ardor by *Harpers Weekly*:

Nor can too much be said in praise of Miss Margaret Illington's Yuki, which retains all the piquancy, the diverting drollery, the naive simplicity of the original, with the added charm of artistic grace and winning personality. There has never been a more captivating impersonation of a Japanese girl on stage.<sup>59</sup>

*The New York Times* and James Metcalfe of *Life* oppose *Harpers Weekly's*

Illington review on the grounds of her ability to portray Japanese-ness. Her authenticity is ineffective according to Metcalfe's scathing comment—"she is not by any means as Japanese as an American machine embroidered kimono."<sup>60</sup> "Yuki is played by Margaret Illington, who at times is sweet, winning, and sympathetic. But she is never Japanese, nor anything like it. Her speech and gesture suggest rather a French woman though it is quite frequently just plain American."<sup>61</sup> This harsh criticism from the *Times* takes the dialogue into account, suggesting that Illington did not adhere to the choppy speech Yuki has in the novel, or even that the other Japanese characters had in the play. The *Times* gives credit to Mary Buckley on her Japanese mode of speech later in the article, implying that

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<sup>55</sup> Shimakawa, Karen. *National Abjection the Asian American Body Onstage*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

<sup>56</sup> Metcalfe, "Article 8 -- No Title."

<sup>57</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale." *New York Times*.

<sup>58</sup> "A Jap Artist Sees 'A Japanese Nightingale'". Sunday Telegram. Nov 29, 1903.

<sup>59</sup> Bonner et al., *Harper's Weekly*.

<sup>60</sup> Metcalfe, "Article 8 -- No Title."

<sup>61</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly's."



there was a “right way” to deliver the Asiatic impersonation. This “right way” dictated the specific readings of Asiatic performance in the early twentieth century which informs the twenty-first century scholar that impersonations may have been inaccurate at best.

Due to the review’s silence on the matter, one can conclude that the biracial identity of Yuki was dropped entirely. If a Japanese woman had had red hair on Broadway in 1903, at least one review would have cited it. To examine this further, a comparison between the surviving images of Illington in her costume is necessary. Printed in *Harper’s Weekly*, the image demonstrates that the character was reconstructed during the dramatization process.<sup>62</sup> Despite the success of the novel and Watanna’s clear depiction of Yuki, William Young and/or the producers tampered with the identity of the character for monetary gain. Illington wears a smooth black wig in the image, indicating that the character did not have the unruly red and black hair described in the novel. The image printed in *Harper’s Weekly* shows the westernization of Yuki. The top she is wearing is embedded with jewels, not a Japanese fashion at the time. Around Illington’s eyes appears to be eyeliner to exaggerate the length of her eyes. Her brows and hair appear black, or darkened. This is when compared to the image beside it taken in 1906 of Illington for *Theatre Magazine*.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Bonner et al., *Harper’s Weekly*.

<sup>63</sup> The Theatre Magazine Company - *Theatre Magazine*, Volume 6; January 1906; 227.



MARGARET ILLINGTON IN "A JAPANESE NIGHTINGALE"

She plays the part of "Yuki" in William Frank's adaptation of Shunzo Watanabe's novel, "A Japanese Nightingale" (New York, New York). The action of the play, which depicts an unusual romance from the "stereotyped" standpoint which follows a marriage between "Yuki," a Japanese girl, and "The American," a young American, "John Blanton." The United States Consul at Tokio, with whom the record of the case has been filed, is killed by "Blanton's" enemies, and the records of the marriage stolen. The heroine is also the temptress, and while "Yuki's" brother appears and demands proof of the marriage, none is forthcoming, hence a priestess is used to save her name from persecution, but in the end is united to him.

*Harper's Weekly*<sup>64</sup>



*Theatre Magazine*<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Bonner et al., *Harper's Weekly*.

<sup>65</sup> The Theatre Magazine Company - *Theatre Magazine*, Volume 6; January 1906; pg. 227.

The dramatization process eradicated key parts of Yuki's intersectional identity. Yuki became exoticized into the marketable, uniform Japanese woman instead of maintaining the biracial context in order to maintain the formulaic nature of the dramatized Asiatic novel produced for Broadway. Shifting away from this construct allowed the audience to view the play within societal boxes they were comfortable with. Where Yuki was meant to represent a "half-caste" struggling in her nation of birth, the production team eliminated the debate of Yuki's personal racial identity.

The newspapers indicate that Kayo, played by May Buckley, had the Japanese representation reviewers desired from an Oriental melodrama.<sup>66</sup> Metcalfe admired Buckley's rendition of a Japanese mother, stating that with better surroundings Buckley's performance would have been "a fair representation of a Japanese".<sup>67</sup> The *Times* concurred with Metcalfe, saying that "of those appearing in the Japanese roles, May Buckley contributes by far the most colorful and convincing picture".<sup>68</sup> Because of the success of *The Mikado* and other yellowface melodramas on Broadway, Japanese-ness was not an accurate depiction of Japanese persons. Understanding that Eaton was not Japanese and had never travelled to Japan, the Asian representation was inaccurate. Birchall points out that Eaton and her sisters loved *The Mikado*, "The girls were mad about Gilbert and Sullivan, and a passion for Japanese styles hit Montreal hard, culminating with an elaborate production of *The Mikado* in 1886."<sup>69</sup> Eaton was partaking

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<sup>66</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale – Broadway Play – Original | IBDB."

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<sup>68</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly's."

<sup>69</sup> Birchall 18.

from an early age in Westernized representations of Eastern culture. These representations could have influenced her later constructions of Asiatic identities.

### **Shifts in Plot and Identity from the Novel to Broadway**

*The Montreal Gazette* made note of the changes Young made from Eaton's novel. Her hometown newspaper stated that "Mr. Young, in adapting the story has taken some liberties, but after all such privileges become necessary for stage use. He has followed pretty closely the plot of the book, but makes the ending a happy one."<sup>70</sup> The last part of the review is puzzling since the novel ended with the romantic couple reunited and in each other's arms declaring eternal love. It can be supposed then that the death of Taro in the later chapters of the novel was removed, as that was the only tragic event to occur in the novel. With Taro living, all would have a happy ending.

The structure of the play is cited in these reviews as well. *The Montreal Gazette* stated that "the piece was offered in four acts."<sup>71</sup> *The New York Times* offers a different opinion, "There was plenty applause last night, and at the end of the third act Mr. Young stepped forth and expressed his thanks for the author".<sup>72</sup> (sic) Young is cited to have given a speech after the play by all reviews given of the show, therefore it is the number of acts that is up for debate. Structurally, the novel can be broken into four sections: Jack touring Japan and meeting Yuki, Yuki and Jack's marriage, Jack tending to a dying Taro, and Yuki's adventures on her own culminating in their reunion on the last two pages. If

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<sup>70</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale." *The Montreal Gazette* - Google News Archive Search. Accessed November 19, 2017.  
<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1946&dat=19031128&id=oUsuAAAAIBAJ&sjid=zH4FAAAAI BAJ&pg=4578,4384271&hl=en>.

<sup>71</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale." *The Montreal Gazette*.

<sup>72</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly's."

Taro's death was eliminated as inferred above, the play could have been reduced to three acts due to decreased plot. *The New York Times* gives an intimately detailed description of the sets during individual scenes such as "the second scene of the first act, showing a road to Tokio", lending more credit to that reviewer's conceptualization of the dramatic structure.<sup>73</sup>

The additional plot points given in *The New York Times* may alter the thematic content of the play compared to the novel. "The ultimate conflict in this play is due to the fact that Jack Bigelow, a young American, has married Yuki, a Japanese Nightingale."<sup>74</sup> While this is the "ultimate conflict" of the novel as well, how the characters cope with marriage is not the same. "A record of the marriage has been filed with the United States Consul at Tokio", the review continues, creating a political environment in the play. When the US Consul questions "the villain", a role which I assume to be the Nakodo after he "purloins" the marriage certificate, the newspaper says this of the scene; "The Jap draws out a knife and Harker (the Consulate) whips out the gun and covers him. Another tableau that flashes in the pan."<sup>75</sup> It should be noted that the newspaper only refers to "the villain" as a Jap and not any of the other Japanese characters, perpetuating the evil stereotype while subtly acknowledging that this stereotype did not apply to Yuki, her brother, or their mother.

The thematic implications of the violent scene as well as placing conflict with the United States government instead of the personal relationship of Yuki and Jack

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<sup>73</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly's."

<sup>74</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly's."

<sup>75</sup> "A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly's."

transforms Eaton's novel into a play with a politicized statement supporting interracial marriage. It has been noted that the biracial identity of Yuki was removed from the play, meaning that the character of Yuki is one hundred percent Japanese in the play. The marriage of a Japanese person to an American person in 1903 was allowed, however the Japanese person could not be a citizen of the United States nor could they move to the United States. A valid marriage could only occur on US soil or at a consulate, hence the conflict of the play.<sup>76</sup> Yuki would not have been afforded the same privileges in the United States as Jack's wife as a white woman, although like white women she would not have been permitted to vote or inherit in most states.<sup>77</sup> Jack and Yuki remain in Japan at the end of the novel, which if the play replicated makes the political statement that a white man has rights in every nation where a woman, especially a woman of color, does not. This is a break from the novel which does not discuss marriage laws, licenses, or include an inquisition of the status of the legality of Yuki to Jack. These alterations of the play place an emphasis on Yuki's gendered role while the novel maintained a more equal focus on how Yuki's intersectionality impacted her life.

The *New York Times* gives this theory breath: "her determination...that the man she loved may be spared suffering and persecution from her enemies (the US government) and his (Taro and the Nakodo), is likely to make an appeal to unsophisticated and sympathetic playgoers. To those who are not so easily moved however, much of that which passes on the stage is apt to evoke at most only the cynical smile of wonder that

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<sup>76</sup> Ng, Franklin. *The History and Immigration of Asian Americans*. Asians in America; 1. New York: Garland Pub, 1998. 42.

<sup>77</sup> Lerner, Gerda. *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition*. Rev. and Expanded ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. 303.

such things are still thought to be part and parcel of a supposedly moving drama”<sup>78</sup> Even though the review was not a positive one, it does show that Yuki’s autonomy remains integral to the plot and that she and Jack combat prejudice to be together.

The author of the *New York Times* review evidently did not believe *Nightingale* to be a well done play, which may have led to the disparaging remark cited in the previous paragraph. The acting and staging were questionable for this reviewer, whereas the set and stagecraft excelled. Perhaps the acting influenced the reviewer’s opinion of the individual characters over the thematic and politicized nature of said characters.

### **Analysis**

As evidenced from previous arguments, the reader of the text and the viewer of the surviving images from the production are demonstrative of a woman versus society debate. Looking even further, one could argue this is an author versus production/society debate that occurred offstage and behind the scenes. The disparities between the dramatized version and the novel reveal a loss of authenticity. The authorship of the novel had defined intentions for the readers and that seems to have been changed by the dramatization. Shifts in the marriage process of the play’s ingénues disfigure the pure amour shared between the novel’s lovers. Adding the other suitor “of her own people” distracts from Jack’s inherent goodness demonstrated multiple times in the novel. It allows a competitive nature between the societal morals of the suitors. This removes the economic burden placed on Yuki for Taro’s education and therefore removes the reason Yuki had for marrying Jack in the novel. It was replaced with a less complicated tale

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<sup>78</sup> “A Japanese Nightingale; Dramatized Novel at Daly’s.”

apropos East versus West. The cultural antagonism of the play then destroys Eaton's original intent which was spelled out in her chapter title "The East and West United".

The shift of identity from biracial intersectional female to a more linear foreign body demonstrates the racist and misogynist sentiments of the late 1800's and early 1900's. Yuki's character as a self-reflection of Eaton was modified for the commercialization of the production. The layers of identity discussed in the novel did not appear in the Broadway play, leaving the historian with the question of why. However, Yuki in the novel illustrates a biracial identity within her intersectional one, one that was read by 200,000 people who bought the book. Yuki's poverty forced her to work, but the only jobs she could get were dictated by her gender and race, which is why she danced for money. Eaton acknowledges the difficulty of a poor woman of color deciding to marry to improve her status.

"What is it you want with me?" he asked, desiring rather to hear her speak than to learn her object for this he knew.

She was solemn now. She flushed and her eyes went down. To explain why she had come to him was a painful task. He could guess that, but she forced the words past her lips.

"To be your wife, my lord" she said in English.<sup>79</sup>

This excerpt demonstrates Eaton's empathy for the precarious position an independent woman had in in the early twentieth century. Autonomy was dangerous, but marriage could be worse since the husband was given full rights under the law regarding the woman's wages, property, and children. The combination of Yuki's gender, race, and

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<sup>79</sup> Watanna, *Nightingale*. 25.



class compel Yuki to marry in order to gain income for her and her family. With the oppression of women and minorities, it appears to be Yuki's only hope for a better future.

The late nineteenth century saw dramatic change for minorities and women. The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution ended slavery, however nothing could stop the systemic racism. Less than 20 years after the ratification of the fourteenth amendment, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress. In Canada, a similar bill entitled the Chinese Immigration Act went through Parliament. Where one door had opened, several others shut. Citizenship for Asian immigrants became illegal, and quotas of immigration popped up in an attempt to quell the flow of foreigners to North America.<sup>80</sup> These quotas were in place until 1968 in the US.<sup>81</sup> These legal forms of oppression restricted Eaton in their multiplicity. As a woman of color, she was unable to claim citizenship or vote. Her character Yuki experienced a mirrored existence as figure who was oppressed by multiple means in another country. These analogous stories create an intersectional narrative between author and character.

These acts are indicative of the hostile socio-political state contemporary to Eaton's writings towards biracial, ethnic, and foreign persons. Her efforts to discuss biracialism and place the multi-ethnic body on stage as well as in the homes of Americans via a novel begins a dialogue between the general public and the victims of racism. The Broadway production may not have included Eaton's intended thematic biracialism, however it did have a successful marriage between an American citizen and a Japanese citizen, which was certainly a step towards integration. The stage presented a

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<sup>80</sup> Knowles 71-72.

<sup>81</sup> Ng 80.

love story that combatted the political obstruction of Asiatic persons by the United States government. Eaton may not have had self-representation, but she assuredly witnessed an intersectional lead female character through the dramatization of her novel.

The discursive writing about “Watanna” dismisses her as a cultural thief, unworthy of the exalted place of her sister “Sui Sin Far”. Three scholars engage in this identity debate; Annette White-Parks, Paul Spickard, and Emma Teng, who was discussed earlier.<sup>82</sup> White-Parks, Spickard, and Teng make wild comments about Eaton’s identity construction as demonstrated through her writing. But all ignore the erasure of her intersectional character on the Broadway stage. Spickard addresses her biracial identity in his essay “The Subject is Mixed Race; The Boom of the Biracial Autobiography”, correctly pointing to White-Parks’s construction of a problematic racial binary. White-Parks examines solely the mono-racial implications of identity, ignoring half of Eaton’s ethnic make-up, placing both Winnifred and Edith within a Chinese-American construct. Spickard attempts to combat this by stating that, “Eaton lived chiefly on the White side of the line”.<sup>83</sup> This absurd claim lacks an intersectional understanding of identity which tells us that one cannot select a “side” of one’s identity. Neither Eaton sister was permitted to participate in a completely white identity since they were always both Chinese and English. Winnifred Eaton reconstructed this exact debate in *A Japanese Nightingale* with Yuki representing herself. Neither the Japanese nor the white Americans claimed Yuki; the Eaton sisters endured the same biracial pressures.

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<sup>82</sup> Spickard, Paul. “The Subject is Mixed Race; The Boom of the Biracial Autobiography.” ed. Parker, David, and Song, Miri. *Rethinking “Mixed Race”*. London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2001.

<sup>83</sup> Spickard 77.

It is from this direct self-representation that the biracial identity of Eaton through Yuki should have been placed on the Broadway stage. However, the dramatization process erased pieces of that identity to maintain the political standards of the time as evidenced above. Based on other Orientalist plays that season, this should have been the perfect formula to create a Broadway hit. Despite the short-lived run, audiences did glimpse a strong lead female character who embodied the entrepreneurship and tenacity of the character's inspirational authoress, Winnifred Eaton.<sup>84</sup>

## **Chapter 2 *Rachel***

“All of the characters are colored.”<sup>85</sup> So begins the play *Rachel* by Angelina Weld Grimké which illustrates how a young black woman in 1918 uses her education and experiences to make decisions about her body. Her intersectional identity creates and informs her decisions that, as will be discussed, are representative of the playwright's own intersectionality and education. I argue that this play, initially labeled as a “race

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<sup>84</sup> This is the only play produced under the name Watanna that was not completely authored by Eaton. The University of Calgary, which holds a collection of Eaton's, cites several stage plays penned by Eaton. These were not produced.

<sup>85</sup> Grimké, Angelina Weld. *Rachel: A Play in Three Acts*. The Cornhill Company, 1920. iii.

propaganda” play, goes beyond this to create a classic tragedy with an intersectional leading character depicting the multiple forms of oppression black women faced, similar to those that the playwright herself endured.

### **Playwright**

Angelina Weld Grimké came from a long line of activists. Her famous aunts, Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké were social activists in the nineteenth century. Daughters of white slave owners, the sisters were abolitionists, writers, orators, and early first wave feminists. Their brother Henry had three sons, Archibald, Francis, and John, by a slave named Nancy Weston. Archibald and Francis were educated thanks to the help of their abolitionist aunts at Harvard University. Archibald became the second African American man to graduate from Harvard Law School. He married Sarah Stanley, a white woman, who bore a daughter. They named her Angelina after her great aunt.<sup>86 87</sup>

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Angelina lived with her mother in the Midwest from age three to seven, then stayed with her father in Boston. Her parents had split early in life and unfortunately her mother Sarah committed suicide by poisoning herself when Angelina was eighteen. Archibald was an inspiring role model for Angelina, working as the vice president of the NAACP and championing the rights of minorities for his entire career. He moved them to Washington, DC to be near the national headquarters of the NAACP where Angelina began her literary career.<sup>89</sup> Angelina Weld Grimké was incredibly well educated,

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<sup>86</sup> Birney, Catherine H. *The Grimké Sisters: Sarah and Angelina Grimké: The First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*. New York: Haskell House, 1970

<sup>87</sup> Bruce, Dickson D. *Archibald Grimké: Portrait of a Black Independent*. Southern Biography Series. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993.

<sup>88</sup> Lerner 303.

attending Carlton Academy in Minnesota, The Boston Normal School of Gymnastics (later Wellesley College), and summer classes at Harvard.<sup>90</sup> Her writing styles reflect her education with clear Greek structures in her drama, an appreciation for languages like her Spanish poem “Caprichosa”, and her long career as an English teacher. A roster from Harvard shows that Grimké was enrolled in an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Literature course, which may explain her affinity for Neoclassic tragedy.<sup>91</sup>

Intersectionality has been primarily applied to Angelina Weld Grimké’s poetry.<sup>92</sup> Grimké wrote poetry that many describe as the precursor to the Harlem Renaissance, particularly homosexually themed poetry. Placing Grimké as one of the early queer poets of the black community shifts how we can read her treatment of women in her play. The character of Rachel chose not to marry despite the offer to marry a stable man willing to care for her, an important part of the female experience in the early 1900’s. Grimké never married, writing about unrequited love to a woman in her poetry. Her letters to her childhood friend Mary are intimate, as Grimké requesting to call Mary “my wife.”<sup>93</sup>

There is a scholarly debate as to which romantic acquaintance Grimké was writing to. Mary “Mamie” Burrill and Mary “Mamie” Karn both had intimate

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<sup>89</sup> Bruce, *Archibald Grimké*. 27.

<sup>90</sup> Beemyn, Genny. *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington, D.C.*, 2015. 70.

<sup>91</sup> “Harvard Summer School.” *Cambridge Tribune*. July 17, 1909. Cambridge Public Library. 2. Accessed November 11, 2017.  
<https://cambridge.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/cambridge?a=d&d=Tribune19090717-01.2.3&srpos=1&e=--1900---1922--en-20--1--txt-txIN-Angelina%2BWeld%2BGrimke>.

<sup>92</sup> Hull, Gloria T. *Color, Sex, and Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance*. 1st edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

<sup>93</sup> Perry, Mark. *Lift up Thy Voice: The Grimké Family's Journey from Slaveholders to Civil Rights Leaders*. New York: Viking, 2001.

relationships with Grimké and both received Grimké's attention at separate times in her life.<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, Burrill was African American and Karn was white; both were poets and writers themselves. It appears that Karn may not have returned the affection as evidenced in Genny Beemyn's analysis of the lesbian poetry of unrequited love that Grimké wrote. Burrill however did write to Grimké later in life, post scripting a letter with "PS Angie do you love me as you used to?" This letter also held the following line of text; "Could I just come to meet thee once more, in the old sweet way, just coming at your calling, and like an angel bending o'er you breathe into your ear, 'I love you.'" <sup>95</sup> No matter which Mary the letters were addressed to, the emotional and intimate implications have been read by scholars as homosexual, confirming the third element of Grimké's personal intersectional identity.

### **Play**

The structure of the play alone demonstrates a deep understanding of classical works that exemplifies the education of the playwright. Although Aristotle would be disappointed that one of his three unities was not strictly adhered to (Act II occurs four years after Act I and Act III occurs a week after Act II) it is evident that Grimké had a grasp of the *Poetics* and formulated her "race propaganda" play after a classic Greek

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<sup>94</sup> Gloria Hull in "Under the Day's: The Buried Life and Poetry of Angelina Weld Grimké" strongly affirms that Grimké's sole lesbian affections were for her African American playmate Mary Burrill when Burrill and Grimké were 13 and 14 years old respectively. Genny Beemyn in *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington DC* as well as *The Cambridge Companion to African American Women's Literature*. Both list Mary Karn as the object of Grimké's true affections, but potentially had a romantic relationship earlier with Burrill. The dates of the letters are conspicuous, and it is debatable if they were ever sent by Grimké to whichever recipient the letters were intended for. Karn went on to live with another woman, Lucy Diggs Slowe, another writer, for the rest of her life, implying a romantic friendship at minimum. The facts surrounding this case are muddled and questionable, particularly since the *Cambridge Companion* mixes up other facts such as how many acts *Rachel* has (it states four when there are clearly three and that it is a "non-musical play" when there are multiple songs performed by the title character 194).

<sup>95</sup> Beemyn 94.

tragedy. The setting is Aristotelian, taking place within the “tidy but plain” walls of the Loving apartment for the duration of the three acts.

This political propaganda has decidedly a Greek plot; the action occurs offstage while all the decisions regarding subsequent action are made onstage. Those actions are often bloody indicators of larger socio-political concerns, in this case systemic (and violent) racism. There is even a messenger who intervenes by entering unannounced to give a narrative account on the racialized treatment of a young girl. The messenger who informs Rachel of the mistreatment of black children in the North, reinforces the main themes of, as well as stays true to, the Greco style of the action.

Rachel follows a young woman’s coming of age. She discovers the dangerous world through events related to her by her mother surrounding the deaths of her father and older brother. Her faith, relationships, and education are no match for the racial and gender discrimination she faces as a black woman. Once she understands that her fate was sealed by her birth, Rachel vows never to bear children but to care for black children at risk of trauma.

She is supported by her mother, Mrs. Loving, with whom she resides along with her brother. They live in an apartment supported by her mother’s sewing business. In this tragedy, Act One sees the family in happy domestic life as Rachel cares for a small neighbor boy and expressing her affinity for children. The act closes with Mary Loving recounting to her children that their father and older brother were lynched by a white mob. Act Two is four years later, with Rachel and Tom older and seeking work. A friend, John Strong, begins to court Rachel. It becomes clear that it will be difficult to get a job for Tom worthy of his education due to the color of his skin. Strong knows this from

personal experience; as an educated black man himself, Strong tells his story of becoming a head waiter and knowing that is as high of a status as he can reach. Rachel meets a new neighbor Mrs. Lane, inquiring after the schools, asking if the white children in the Northern cities were abusive to the black children, as they had been to her young daughter. Act Three finds Rachel confronted with the truth; her “son” Jimmy would be tormented by white children raised to hate him at school, just as all blacks were mistreated. Tom could never overcome the job market discrimination, and John Strong was willing to marry her. Rachel refuses, saying that she could never bear children knowing they would suffer.<sup>97</sup>

The heartbreaking end of this tragedy is in the anagnorisis of the last monologue, spoken by Rachel herself. She refuses John’s proposal moments after accepting it. She realizes that her fate would be the same as her mother’s if she were to wed. Weeping, Rachel confesses to God that even her love for John will not sway her decision to never bear little black children who could be harmed in the world of white men. Her devastation comes through her lines as she says, “my little children! I will never see you now. Never to be. But you are somewhere and wherever you are you are mine. Even God can’t take you away!”<sup>98</sup>

### **Setting**

The apartment is described as bare, with a shabby armchair and inexpensive wall hangings. Gas lighting is the primary source of light even though this is set after 1900, a time when electricity was readily available. This implies the apartment building is older

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<sup>97</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 91.

<sup>98</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 96.



and has not been renovated in over twenty years. Poverty then becomes part of the set dressing in its simplicity as well as in its “shabby” construction. The set, therefore, stages the class of the Loving family, placing them in a lower socio-economic bracket.

The decoration of the inexpensive wall hangings depicts a devout family. The paintings in the play are described by the playwright including their placement around the apartment. They include; Raphael’s *Madonna*, Millet’s *The Reapers* also called *The Gatherers*, and Edward Burne Jones’ *The Golden Stairs*. Each of these pieces demonstrates a different element of the Loving lives: devout religious affiliation, hard work, and deep morals. Grimké used these cultural signifiers to aid in the construction the audience would have of the Loving family. These famous religious images target the audience with not-so-subtle imagery.

### **Character Analysis**

Grimké gives each character beautiful depth that begins with their names. The Loving family that the story centers on is just that: loving. It is a positive effort to deliver a black family that does not typify the violent or comic themes of the era to the audience. Taken from Biblical sources, Mary Loving and Rachel Loving are exemplary of their Christian names. Mary is the mother who sacrifices everything for her children. Mary wields power in her status as the mother but also as the matriarch, slipping in a role different from the nuclear family patriarchy. Jansen mentions this in another context, but I feel as though it is applicable to the entire play: there is no present patriarchal role. Mr. Loving was murdered alongside his eldest son, George. His next son, Tom, does not have the financial means to become a provider since he is unable to get a good-paying job and therefore cannot assume his role at the head of the family. Rachel herself denies John Strong the ability to become a patriarch when she refuses his marriage proposal. The play

is without a patriarch even within its visual imagery. The paintings on the wall referred to in the stage directions on page one of the play include a Madonna with child by Raphael and two other famous paintings of women.<sup>99</sup> Grimké's lack of a male figure extends into the Biblical selection of artwork of Mary Loving's third floor flat. These factors dictate Rachel's familial and societal roles.

By christening her protagonist Rachel, Grimké evokes Genesis. Rachel in Genesis asks God for children with her husband Jacob, similar to how Rachel tells how God spoke to her on page twelve "once I dreamed, and a voice said to me- oh! It was so real- 'Rachel, you are to be a mother to little children' ...God spoke to me through some one, I believe."<sup>100</sup> Grimké takes this Biblical mother and turns her into the mother of children who are not her own, leaving herself celibate and barren by choice and thereby reconstructing the gendered framework society inscribed on her. Her motherly tendencies and kindness are not diminished however; on page fifty nine of the script, Mrs. Lane says to Rachel, "you don't belie your name", referring to Rachel's maternal treatment of Ethel, Mrs. Lane's eight-year-old daughter.<sup>101</sup>

Tom Loving becomes a twist of Uncle Tom, Grimké's attempt to reclaim the Uncle Tom stereotype and mold him into performing not for the white man, but as a way to entertain a small brown boy he loves. Tom dances for little Jimmy, making the sad young boy smile.<sup>102</sup> He is no longer a stock character, but a man with dreams, an education, and a sense of humor because he chooses it. The other adult male in the cast

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<sup>99</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 59.

<sup>102</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 39.

has his own agenda and a name that is not from another source. John Strong is named strictly due to his role as an average man (John) with broad shoulders (Strong). He offers Rachel his bulk as a means of protection as well as his stable job to provide for her and for his mother. “Grimké’s portrayal of a bright, educated young African American man’s limited options reinforces how lynching’s shadow creeps into every aspect of domestic life.”<sup>103</sup> Strong tells Rachel that his white classmates come into his restaurant and speak of their jobs while Strong himself is shut out of that world due to the color of his skin despite his education.

### **Intersectionality in Performance**

The audience is privy to the heartbreaking private lives of the black people on stage. They see how the actions that took place off stage affect the characters they are watching: Mrs. Loving is the breadwinner and matriarch since her husband and son were murdered, and Tom and Rachel lost a father and brother as well as sources of income and protection. Every decision the Loving family makes is as a result of that lynching, leading the audience to the pity Aristotle describes as an essential part of tragedy. Grimké creates an intimacy between her audience and her characters that shows the devastating consequences of these harrowing acts.

The lynching itself was not done to the women of the play, however its impacts are resounding. Lynching is symbolic of control; a black person was not in control of his/her life during this time since it could be taken at any time with no consequences for the white perpetrator. It does not need to be the act of lynching; simply the knowledge that her child could be taken from her caused Rachel to abandon all notions of

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<sup>103</sup> Jansen, Anne Mai Yee. "Under Lynching's Shadow: Grimke's Call for Domestic Reconfiguration in "Rachel." 47, no. 2-3 (2014): 391. 397.

motherhood. Jobs, property, friendly faces, all were out of black control and at the mercy of whites. *The Journal of Negro History* printed a piece in 1994 arguing that lynching as a tool was used predominantly against black men. Although Hester is right to point out that Grimké focused on the lynching of black males instead of simply blacks, she does come full circle with the effects of said lynching stating, “Hence, the issue of lynching affected the lives of black women in different but equally powerful and destructive ways as black men.”<sup>104</sup> This intersectionality of the black female identity is evident through how lynching affected men and women differently, with the former (George Loving) losing their lives and the latter (Mary Loving) losing everything else.

Rachel’s character is not completely black. Although her lineage in the play suggests both her parents are black, she herself is described as being not black, or brown even. This separation between herself and those who are completely black is clear during Mrs. Lane’s visit with her daughter Ethel. Ethel moves away from Rachel as though she was a white teacher instead of one of her own race. Mrs. Lane references the difference between her daughter and other “colored children” in this scene:

Mrs. Lane: What color is this adopted boy of yours?

Rachel (Gently): Why- he’s brown

Mrs. Lane: Are there any black children?

Rachel (Nervously): Why- yes.<sup>105</sup>

Mrs. Lane also refers to herself and her husband as “ugly and black” later in the scene. It is a clear indicator that Rachel, and Jimmy, appear different from others in the play. It also alludes to Grimké’s personal story of biracialism. This also places the characters into

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<sup>104</sup> Hester, “An Examination of the Relationship Between Race and Gender in an Early Twentieth Century Drama.” 251.

<sup>105</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 53.

a physical caste system that is both self-imposed and socially reinforced. Color becomes a gradient on which to determine social mobility and even self-respect as Mrs. Lane points out in this scene. This gradient also creates a debate about the politicized body that can be altered based on quantity of blackness.

The debate at the center of this drama lies in Rachel's body. As a black woman, her world is informed by the color of her skin and her gendered role in society. Her education does little for her, despite being an incredible student. Her family does not have the means to lift her in society, nor even to fight its evils. The choice John Strong gives her at the end of the play is one that many women faced: to wed and bear children, black children. A marriage to Strong would be to have a black husband who could not excel past his station as head waiter despite his education. That marriage would also mean that her black husband could be lynched. Rachel's body is the one thing she cannot control and the one thing that dictates her life. She longs to have children of her own and to be loved by the man that she evidently loves. However, the risk outweighs the reward for her. The imminent threat to her unborn children is so strong that she refuses her own happiness in order to spare them. Rachel eliminates the risk of poverty and racial discrimination to her unborn children by not reproducing.

This agency comes at a devastating cost to Rachel. Her dreams die as John Strong leaves the flat, "for all of time- 'Goodbye!'"<sup>106</sup>. But little Jimmy's weeping from the bedroom keeps her grounded. She goes to him, crying herself, wishing to comfort him in their own blackness.

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<sup>106</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. 95.

Such a decision could only come from Rachel's intersectionality in that multiple parts of her oppressions are informing her to make a choice. Her racial background combined with her potential for motherhood formulated the sexually deviant choice she ultimately came to. Despite the powerful desire to be a mother, her blackness quelled her reproductive instinct and informed her decision to remain celibate. Rachel compromises between her intersectional identity that eliminates the safety of her children and her desire to be a mother by adopting a child whose parents died. In this way, she can mother a child without a husband in an attempt to protect that child from racialized violence.

What places Rachel in the category of "queer" is not homosexuality. Her decision to remain partner-less and without biological children within a culture of strict heterosexual norms dictates her inclusion within the bounds of "sexually deviant". Her deviance removes the threat of the lynch mob for her (male) children, but it opens her to the caprice of a society that demanded espousal and patriarchy.

Other critics have examined Rachel through yet another identity lens of age, finding that her desire to be a young girl offers a form of protection against this systemic bodily threat. In "Under Lynching's Shadow: Grimké's Call for Domestic Reconfiguration in 'Rachel'," Anne Jansen makes the argument that Rachel attempts to remain a girl in order to subvert these societal problems that women face.<sup>107</sup> I disagree. I believe that Rachel takes it upon herself to grow up faster than anyone in the play. It lies within her deviant behavior: deviant from the social norm that a woman was expected to marry and bear children. She refuses to do so since she fears exposing her unborn children to bigotry and untimely death. However, Rachel takes a bold step farther- she

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<sup>107</sup> Jansen, 392.

refuses to marry a “Strong” man who may protect her against the white horde that lives on the edge of her fear. She leaves herself exposed as a single woman at the turn of the century: one who cannot own property, vote, or hold certain employment. She puts her body at risk by not engaging with John Strong. I believe this makes her far stronger a heroine than she has been given credit for. Her agential choice to not be wed is a bold statement insinuating that the black woman must learn to care for herself and that the Strong black man cannot protect her from the racial/gendered threats that plague her.

Poverty is a present threat to Rachel as well. Once her mother dies, the family’s main income will too. This burdens Mrs. Loving initially with single motherhood, then will burden her children who are unable to find work suited to their education. John Strong mentions this outright, stating that he could not find a job after he graduated college and instead serves his classmates at a restaurant. Tom and Rachel both have higher education but face the same discrimination based on race. Their opportunities despite their qualifications will be stunted, leaving their future precarious.

### **The Play in Performance**

Led by Archibald Grimké, Angelina Weld Grimké’s father, the Washington, DC chapter of the NAACP worked diligently to combat the social prejudices that their constituents endured as well as confronting injustices. In 1914, an article mentions Angelina’s involvement in the construction of a laundry in a poor neighborhood of Washington DC. The laundry was built from donations for the people living in that area since they did not have a sanitary method or location to wash clothing. This area was predominantly “colored.”<sup>108</sup> It provides an example of the ways the NAACP and

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<sup>108</sup> “Laundry Installed for Social Settlement in Southwest Washington.” Evening Star. [Volume] (Washington, D.C.) 1854-1972, March 10, 1914, Page 20, Image 20 « Chronicling America « Library of

Angelina were working to bolster the community. It also shows an inequity that one might not necessarily think of. The blatant inequity of black citizens was something that Grimké carried with her possibly from this project wherein citizens were denied access to clean water.

Two years later, Grimké's finished play was performed at Miner Normal School.

*The Evening Star* advertised the play as follows:

“Rachel”, a race play in three acts, is to be given under the auspices of the drama committee of the District of Columbia branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, at the Miner Normal School, Friday and Saturday at 8pm. Miss Angelina W. Grimke a teacher of the M Street High School, is the author of the play. John G. Underhill, dramatic critic of New York, is to attend the Friday performance as the representative of the national association.”<sup>109</sup>

This production was a family affair with the Guy family making up a large portion of the cast. Nathaniel Guy is cited as both director and actor in this production. Miss Rachel Guy played the titular role, and she “displayed talent in a part that necessitated considerable range and ability along emotional lines.”<sup>110</sup> Barington Guy played Jimmy Mason. Other actors listed include William Washington, Blanch Butler, and “juveniles”, but which roles they played are not clear. It is undeterminable whether William Washington or Nathaniel Guy played John Strong or Tom Loving. It could be assumed that Blanch Butler played Mrs. Ethel Lane, a caller, and a female role that had a larger portion of lines. “Laura Bruce Glenn was the manager, and Gregoria Fraser had

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Congress. Accessed November 11, 2017. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1914-03-10/ed-1/seq-20/>.

<sup>109</sup> “Colored Cast to Present Race Play.” *Evening Star*. [Volume] (Washington, D.C.) 1854-1972, March 01, 1916, Image 15 «Chronicling America «Library of Congress. Accessed November 11, 2017. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1916-03-01/ed-1/seq-15/>.

<sup>110</sup> “Colored Cast to Present Race Play.”



charge of the music” according to the article, adding professional elements to an amateur performance.<sup>111</sup> The actors are deemed “amateurs or semi professionals” in *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*.<sup>112</sup>

We can presume the “amateur” nature of the play through the intersectional lens as well. The “colored cast”<sup>113</sup> immediately draws attention to the racial makeup of those working on the production. As a commercial effort of the NAACP, everyone involved was black with a single exception; *The Evening Star* notes that famed drama critic John G. Underhill was slated to attend, and potentially review the first performance of *Rachel*. It states: “John G. Underhill, dramatic critic of New York, is to attend the Friday performance as the representative of the national association.”<sup>114</sup> It is unclear if Underhill did attend, however he was a white academic and drama critic based in New York City at the time. The association referred to in the article was the NAACP, which places him in direct dialogue with the organization’s agenda. His name carried a weight that would have been noticed, particularly since this was after he had served as general representative to Canada for the United States. Underhill went on to translate Spanish plays and literature.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> “Colored Cast to Present Race Play.”

<sup>112</sup> Perkins, Kathy A., and Judith L Stephens. *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. 3.

<sup>113</sup> “Colored Cast to Present Race Play.”

<sup>114</sup> “Colored Cast to Present Race Play.”

<sup>115</sup> “John G. Underhill, Producer, 70, Dies; Authority on Benavente and Other Spanish Authors Was Translator and Writer.” Accessed November 11, 2017. <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=9901E1DB173FE73ABC4F52DFB366838D659EDE>.

With the black cast, we can turn to the location of the first performance. Myrtilla Miner Normal School was part of the Washington, DC public school system. It had been rebuilt in 1913, meaning that the play went up in a relatively new building. The school was historically for “colored girls”, but saw the addition of boys in 1879.

With the knowledge of the cast, location, and the only (partially) confirmed audience member, it can be argued that the first performance of *Rachel* met some of the goals the NAACP had. The presumed white audience member witnessed a race propaganda play within a black community. The initial act of performance laid the groundwork for the legacy *Rachel* would have. The audience construction was an incredibly important part of the conception of the play. Written by a black author for a white audience, the goal of the play was to educate whites. The Drama Committee of the NAACP sponsored Grimké to accomplish this. Therefore, the segregation that the Little Theatre Movement historically had would have been detrimental to the objective of *Rachel*. The white journalist attending the production and potentially writing a review in a “white” newspaper would have been a large step in the accomplishment of the committee’s initial goals. The story of *Rachel* was never intended for a black audience, but instead was the creation of the black experience to further amicable relations between the races during a time of violence.

The performances did not end in Washington DC. In 1917, the company travelled to New York City to present the play again. The *New York Tribune* published a blurb about the play in advance under the “Plays and Players” column on April 26, 1917. “The centre of things dramatic will shift once more to the Neighborhood Playhouse to-night, when ‘Rachel’ by Angelina Grimké will be presented for a single performance by a

company of negro actors from Washington. The play deals with present-day negro life in New York.”<sup>116</sup> This snippet is interesting for a few reasons. First, it claims that the setting of the play is New York City. The script makes no indication in what city the action takes place, simply stating, “A Northern City” for the location on the third page.<sup>117</sup> Second, it makes clear that this is a troupe of “negro actors from Washington” representing “present-day negro life”. *The New York Tribune* was a publication that did not advertise to black audiences in comparison other papers at the time such as *The Colored American*, which published for a primarily black audience.<sup>118 119</sup> However this blatant indicator of race within the *New York Tribune* reads almost like a warning to its readers about the nature of the play.

A third interesting note is the location listed for the performance. The Neighborhood Playhouse was founded in 1915. Originally the Henry Street Settlement House, this space was transformed by wealthy philanthropists into a theatre. This theatre became a part of what Dorothy Chansky would later describe as *The Little Theatre Movement*.<sup>120</sup> Chansky lists the Neighborhood Playhouse as one of the best known Little Theatres.<sup>121</sup> Although the composition of the audience cannot be certain, Chansky

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<sup>116</sup> “Plays and Players.” New-York Tribune. New York, N.Y. 1866-1924, April 26, 1917, Page 11, Image 11 «Chronicling America «Library of Congress. Accessed November 11, 2017. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1917-04-26/ed-1/seq-11/>.

<sup>117</sup> Grimké, *Rachel*. iii.

<sup>118</sup> “Plays and Players.”

<sup>119</sup> “About The Colored American.” Accessed November 11, 2017. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83027091/>.

<sup>120</sup> “Our History.” Accessed November 11, 2017. <http://neighborhoodplayhouse.org/about/our-history>.

<sup>121</sup> Chansky, Dorothy. *Composing Ourselves*. Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and the American Audience. Theater in the Americas. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004. 5.

analyzed the Little Theatre Movement extensively in order to discuss it. In her chapter, Little Theatre and Audience Construction, Chansky notes “Audience members were likely to know each other...One of the challenges Little Theatre posed- and faced- was in the encounters it staged in audiences comprising both members or sympathizers and guests or outsiders.”<sup>122</sup> This separation was partially self-imposed along ideological lines, meaning that one would attend and participate in theatre that matched one’s own politics. Here Chansky points to another form of separation among the audiences: “The self-selected Little Theatre audience, regardless of class, geographical, or even internal differences, was very uniform in one sense: it was almost always racially segregated.”<sup>123</sup> This insight brings us to an unsettling conclusion—that those who saw *Rachel* at the Neighborhood Playhouse were likely black or already committed to Grimké’s, and the NAACP’s, cause. Therefore, the segregation that the Little Theatre Movement historically had would have been detrimental to the objective of *Rachel*. However, *Rachel* may have been unique even within its own theatrical container of Little Theatre. “Modeling a Future”, chapter six of Chansky’s text, describes the “folk plays” of the Little Theatre Movement as some of the theatre for social change performed about the African American experience. Done in blackface, these plays were written by whites for whites. This could be why the article indicated strongly who would be performing and why. Written by a biracial woman about “negro life” for a white audience, *Rachel* does not fit into the neat boxes Chansky outlines in her study.

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<sup>122</sup> Chansky 15.

<sup>123</sup> Chansky 15.

After performing in New York City, the players moved on to Cambridge, MA. Grimké had taken a few classes at Harvard, where George Pierce Baker created his groundbreaking Workshop 47.<sup>124</sup> In 1909, Grimké was in attendance at Harvard, less than a year after Baker had started the Harvard Dramatic Club. It is not a far leap to connect the two, particularly since the school played host to a performance of *Rachel* eight years later in 1917.<sup>125</sup>

### **Analysis**

Grimké's play was written as a commission for the NAACP to promote the black experience. I believe that this unique framework allowed societal discourse to take place both onstage and off. Categorized as a "race play", the anti-lynching message is explicitly directed towards the intended white audience.

*Rachel* fights systemic oppression within a set container. The play is physically contained in the third-floor apartment, placing societal conflicts in the home. Grimké's choice to maintain unity of setting is demonstrative of her desire to place the character's oppression within a broader ideological debate that affects the intimate lives of innocents and not in the hands of whites. The war fought by a minority group against the ruling class is fought daily by young children like Jimmy Mason who finally tells Rachel about the abuses he faces at school. By writing Jimmy's monologue as a messenger from a classic Greek drama, Grimké shields the audience from the act itself. This could be Grimké's way of telling the audience that even if one does not see these events, the public cannot ignore their occurrences, nor can the audience remain ignorant of the

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<sup>124</sup> "Harvard Summer School."

<sup>125</sup> Peterson, Bernard L. *The African American Theatre Directory, 1816-1960: A Comprehensive Guide to Early Black Theatre Organizations, Companies, Theatres, and Performing Groups*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997.

ramifications of such acts on the family unit. Therefore, by placing the play in the home, the audience interacts with the ideological debate at a domestic, intimate level.

These oppressions do not stay between children. Grimké points to Jimmy Mason in the second act as a seed, demonstrating to the audience that childhood is where these prejudices are instilled. From an early age, Jimmy will know to fear and hate the white boys who did this to him through no fault of his own. These acts lead to those described in Mrs. Loving's harrowing account of the lynching of her husband and son. Again, a messenger recounts the hate crimes inflicted upon her and her family. This messenger delivers unto her children the last moments of their father and older brother with a tale of caution; these men died because they stood up for themselves. The system designed to bring justice never would, and so Mrs. Loving moved what remained of her family, finally revealing the true cause of her grief to her children Rachel and Tom once they are old enough to understand.

Reading this monologue is powerful on its own; it was delivered for the first time by actress Zita Dyson in 1916 in Washington DC. Her performance was deemed, "also good" by the critic in attendance. The newspaper that printed the critique, *The Evening Star*, included a phrase from the program of the performance that notes the intent of the playwright. "It is claimed on the program that 'this is the first attempt to use the stage as race propaganda in order to enlighten the American people relative to the lamentable condition of 10,000,000 of colored citizens in this free republic.'"<sup>126</sup> This places the audience in direct dialogue with Dyson as witnesses not only to the crimes committed but also to the loss Dyson's character endures. This loss is layered, grief becomes entangled

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<sup>126</sup> "Colored Cast to Present Race Play."

with a lack of income and a single mother is constructed from events beyond her control. Mr. Loving chose to stand up for his community and race, and faceless and nameless white men representing the ignorant mob chose to lynch him, but only Mrs. Loving must face the consequences of these choices as the minority woman left behind.

The behavior of the characters and the decor of the household has been remarked upon by scholars as an attempt to demonstrate to the white audience a similarity between blacks and whites. By portraying a young woman who enjoyed contemporary music, surrounded by religious images, and working as a philanthropist in her own right, the character of Rachel is meant to lure the white female audience member into reflecting her own image in Rachel. Carolyn Stubbs has a concurring opinion in her dissertation, listing desirable qualities utilized by the black characters as an attempt by Grimké to make African Americans more appealing to the white audience. “Despite her attitude toward whites, all of her black characters, without exception, mirror white middle -class virtues and values. Miss Grimké placed emphasis upon the use of correct grammar, cleanliness, and interest in the arts.”<sup>127</sup>

Grimké’s use of religious allusions, remarked on in the “Setting” section of this chapter as well as the name section, can be interpreted as a method to demonstrate the purity and innocence of the Loving family. By exhibiting the tragic events that happened to a “good Christian family” that works hard and educates their children, Grimké is constructing a family that upheld early twentieth-century ideology. The tragedy is then placed in the treatment of this family that leads to the deviant choices Rachel’s character

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<sup>127</sup> Stubbs, Carolyn. “Angelina Weld Grimke: Washington Poet and Playwright.” 1978, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

makes. This makes the family victims of circumstance. Working together, the religious backdrop and the middle-class setting created a well-rounded backdrop meant to entice the white female audience member to empathize with her darker complexioned sisters.

### **Conclusion**

Grimké's writings were, at the time, revolutionary as scholars have been quick to point out. However, these scholars have focused on individual parts of the identity that Grimké constructed in *Rachel* as well as her intimate poetry but not how these pieces worked together as an intersectional identity long before Crenshaw began to write. As a well-educated homosexual black woman with familial ties to the NAACP, Grimké used her platform to share an identity not yet recognized via a socio-political tragedy reminiscent of Neoclassic tragedy. This intersectional identity of Rachel was intended for a white (female) audience, as I have demonstrated above, in an effort to educate and sway the socio-political opinions of said audience within the context of the Little Theatre Movement playwrighting and as a founder of the Harlem Renaissance.



### **Chapter 3 *Hope For A Harvest***

This play is demonstrative of Sophie Treadwell's intersectional identity, albeit uniquely. Treadwell places self-representation within two separate containers: two leading characters named Lotta and Tonie. Each represents a different moment in Treadwell's life and how she dealt with her identity at those different times. It also allows multiple forms of identity to interact with each other, similar to the clashing of identities within the self that many multi-ethnic people experience, and as Treadwell must have endured. This debate shows that one can never be only a single piece of one's identity—hence Crenshaw's essay outlining intersectionality. The crucial interaction between these identities is constructed by Treadwell onstage, allowing a literal dialogue to occur between them. The following chapter will break the original novel, play, and production down to examine these self-representational aspects more closely and the treatment of intersectionality through the two lead female characters.

#### **Playwright**

In my experience, large portions of identity are those determined by parentage and therefore are out of one's control, such as heritage and class. Sophie Anita Treadwell's case is no different. Treadwell was born to Alfred Treadwell and Nettie Fairchild in southern California in 1885. Her mother was of European descent, a fact Nettie was proud of. Treadwell's father attempted to hide his Mexican heritage. Jerry Dickey described this familial conflict in his biography of Treadwell titled *Broadway's*

*Bravest Woman: Selected Writings of Sophie Treadwell*. In the introduction, Dickey writes, “When Mrs. Treadwell wanted to hurt her daughter, she criticized Sophie’s dark features... Sophie grew up in a family environment that encouraged her to bury her Mexican ancestry, an issue she treats openly in her novel *Hope for a Harvest*.”<sup>128</sup> Treadwell’s Mexican heritage led her to write many characters who embodied the multi-ethnic conflict that she herself felt. In her novels and plays, many of these characters are referred to as “half-breeds”. Dickey again explains: “As half-breeds they felt not only scorned by white Americans but also left in some sort of psychological ‘no man’s land,’ as they were neither Indians nor Anglos”.<sup>129</sup>

From an early age, Treadwell was interested in theatre and writing. Despite difficult economic setbacks after her father Alfred left her and her mother when she was five, Treadwell made sure she finished school. Alfred was a language professor, which may have influenced Treadwell’s drive to complete high school and college. He was in and out of her life, but stayed in contact, even giving Treadwell a little money here and there for school. It was not enough however, and Treadwell turned to stage acting to earn a living. Apparently, she was not very good and did not get cast frequently, but her teen years spent on stage exposed her to theatrical practice. After her failed acting career, Treadwell became an investigative journalist for local newspapers.

She had remarkable success as a journalist, going undercover for several exposés. A stint as a “prostitute” led to a scathing piece rattling out inhospitable settlement houses

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<sup>128</sup> Dickey, Jerry, and Miriam Lopez-Rodriguez, eds. *Broadway’s Bravest Woman: Selected Writings of Sophie Treadwell*. 1st edition. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006.

<sup>129</sup> Dickey 7.

in San Francisco, the charitable homes that were founded by socialite women to help the downtrodden. Treadwell reported that she was turned away or sent on to the next one without aid. She also braved World War I as the only female American journalist to report on the war. These stories had a tremendous impact on Treadwell's creative life, as evidenced by her famous work *Machinal* (1922), which was loosely based on her coverage of Elizabeth Mohr's trial as well as Ruth Snyder's famed execution.<sup>130</sup>

The article that put Treadwell on the map was published in 1918, when Treadwell interviewed the notorious bandit Pancho Villa at his home in Mexico. This exciting feature was generously kind to Villa, and became the foundation of Treadwell's first play to be performed on Broadway. *Gringo* went up in 1921, less than two years after Treadwell's adventure to Mexico.<sup>131</sup> It contained elements that Treadwell used in several of her other works that will be explored in the analysis of *Hope for a Harvest*, including a "half-breed" character, romantic plot lines, racial tension, and the idyllic west.

In a previous paper, I have addressed how Treadwell began reflecting her own character traits within *Gringo*.<sup>132</sup> Although full of juicy details surrounding identity conflict within the self, *Gringo* would not suffice for this thesis since those debates occurred in a minor character. By using *Hope for a Harvest*, this chapter will explore how Treadwell places her own identity into a binary debate between her two lead

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<sup>130</sup> "Machinal, Sophie Treadwell." 215-220. Kabatchnik, Amnon. 2010. *Blood on the Stage, 1925-1950: Milestone Plays of Crime, Mystery, and Detection*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2010. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 19, 2017).

<sup>131</sup> Treadwell, Sophie. *Gringo*. 1921.

<sup>132</sup> Goodell, Emily. "Sophie Treadwell: Staging the Self Through Journalism, Playwriting, and Fiction." Binghamton University, 2016.

characters. Placing this debate in major roles was part of my selection process for dramatic texts to examine.

### **Play**

*Hope for a Harvest*, written in 1938, demonstrates another form of intersectionality through the leading female role. Antoinette Martin is a racially ambiguous sixteen-year-old girl at the time of the play, set in 1940 in San Joaquin, California. The action follows Antoinette's (Tonie's) love affair with Victor, an Italian-American whom her father despises, and her relations with another boy, Billie. When her cousin Carlotta comes to the ranch after escaping the war in Europe, Tonie begins to rely on Lotta, as does the rest of the cast. Lotta, a white woman recently widowed, attempts to turn the farm around. She hopes to live off the land with her little cousin Tonie, but Tonie finds herself pregnant and alone. 45-year-old Lotta convinces Tonie that fertility in a woman is important just like the fertility of land. Tonie keeps the child, Lotta sells land to Victor's father, Victor and Tonie decide to be married, and Lotta finds love with Tonie's father Elliott.

This three-act tragicomedy keeps the audience in suspense. At every turn, the audience is given more information about the infertile land, the twisted triangle of racism and young love spun by Tonie, and Lotta's desperation for peace. Although it was advertised as a comedy, critics responded to the play by calling it a "rural drama".<sup>133</sup> <sup>134</sup> I believe that it falls under the category of tragicomedy since it has elements of a tragedy

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<sup>133</sup> "Fredric March 'HOPE FOR A HARVEST' Florence Eldridge 1941 FLOP New Haven Tryout Flyer at Amazon's Entertainment Collectibles Store." Accessed November 20, 2017. <https://www.amazon.com/Fredric-HARVEST-Florence-Eldridge-Tryout/dp/B00TJBM928>.

<sup>134</sup> "*Machinal*" Sophie Treadwell. *Blood on the Stage*. 219.

but ends happily. The structure of each scene sets up an expectation of tragic outcome but then reveals a hopeful twist, allowing the audience to be hopeful for the future of the characters.

This can be seen directly in Lotta's plot line, which provides the basis for the play. Her story maintains three foci: the failing farm, the economic depression, and her eternal hope for a better future. When Lotta enters, the family living on the ancestral farm is stunned to see their cousin returning from Europe. Lotta immediately sets out to restore the family home and farm to its former glory. Elliott, her cousin, tells Lotta how the land has died. His descriptions of the farm can be equated to accounts of the Dust Bowl: stories of arid land drying up and government interference in the crop market.<sup>135</sup> His pessimism leads the audience to believe that Lotta acted rashly selling part of the land to the Delucchi family (Victor's family). Lotta's faith that the money she made from her deal with Joe Delucchi would fund a well to restore the land is directly challenged by Elliott's analysis of the land. He says no matter what, the land is unusable, and the crop market is at an all-time low. The tragedy turns however when it is resolved by the hard work that Lotta dedicates to her farm and the love she shares with Elliott.

The hopeful plot of Lotta is perfectly foiled against the tumultuous journey of Tonie. Tonie's battles are intimately personal and comprehensively linked to her identity. She endures racism, teen pregnancy, rejection by two suitors, and gender discrimination in the job market as part of her story arc. These discriminatory categories are interconnected, placing Tonie in Crenshaw's description of intersectionality. Her story line reflects these separate pieces interacting in systemic ways that oppress her. Although

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<sup>135</sup> Treadwell, Sophie. *Hope for a Harvest*. Samuel French. 1938. 29, 63.

it is never explicitly stated in the script, a conversation Tonie and Lotta share implies that Tonie borrows money from Lotta to get an abortion. In the previous scene, Victor rejects Tonie when she reveals the pregnancy and that Billie is the father, and Tonie is left to her own devices. Tonie goes to Lotta asking for twenty dollars, saying she needs to go to the city for a few days to take care of something. After a sentimental conversation with Lotta, which will be discussed later in this chapter, Tonie decides to keep the child. In the penultimate scene, Tonie and Victor decide that the child could grow up alongside their own. They exit happily to be wed.

Throughout the women's journeys, Elliott illustrates the American sentiment of the late 1930's. The American culture that Elliot represents present roadblocks for both women. He demonstrates the racial tensions between the white farming community and non-whites during the Great Depression, a part that his own daughter is stuck playing. His daughter cannot inherit the land he wanted her to because bits have been sold off to the Italian neighbors. Lotta reveals that she is leaving all her property to Tonie since she has no one else to leave it to. Elliott expresses his happiness at Tonie's marriage to Victor Delucchi because the Delucchis are the present owner of Elliott's old inheritance. Up until this moment, Elliott's resentment toward the Delucchi family is expressed through racial slurs. Elliott refers to them exclusively as "Dagoes", a derogatory term for an Italian-speaking or Spanish-speaking person. He refers to Japanese persons as Japs, a common slur particularly on the precipice of World War II. The influx of immigrants, which was discussed at length in chapter one, created blame in the minds of blue-collar Americans who felt their opportunities were being taken from them by foreign nationals. On page twenty-eight, Elliott tells Lotta exactly how he feels:

Elliott: oh, nobody lives in 'em anymore, but Dagoes and Japs. They've driven us out, Lot.

Lotta: How?

Elliott: Oh, undercut us- overlived us- over-bred us- an inferior race will always breed out a superior one!

Lotta: I thought- when I left Europe I was getting away from all that!

Elliott: You walked right into it again! Wait till you see your mailbox- there's a whole row of 'em there- where just our one Thatcher box used to be- Cadematori, Yamaguchi- Sanguinetti- Matsumoto- Cardozo- Ito- all living on what was just our one ranch- and all despising each other- and-<sup>136</sup>

This is coming from Elliott who married Verna who was a woman of mixed Native heritage. The marriage creates the derision his mother, Tonie's grandmother, feels toward her mixed granddaughter. His selective racism is explained later in the play when Mrs. Martin, Elliott's mother and present matriarch of the Thatcher family, questions his reasons for marrying such a questionable woman. His reply: Verna McCann had land.<sup>137</sup> Elliott shows his hand in the third act when Tonie goes to the city. He used to farm peaches and his life's dream was to cross-breed the perfect peach. He uses this fact to illustrate his racialized attitude towards his own daughter. Elliott states that he used to wish Tonie was never born and he should have known from working with his fruit stock how she would turn out. These words, painful to read, appear to be Treadwell tipping her hat to her own childhood. Her characters demonstrate the full array of American opinions toward race at an intimate level.

Treadwell, the Agent of this play,<sup>138</sup> used each character to illustrate a piece of American identity as well as to provide an example of what American life could include.

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<sup>136</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 28.

<sup>137</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 26.

Part of the familial structure of *Harvest* is the matriarchal construction of the Thatchers. The first Thatcher to live on the ancestral land was a woman, Agnes Thatcher, whom the family places on a pedestal. Her journey over the hills to come west and farm the land embodies Manifest Destiny. The role of matriarch is now in the hands of Mrs. Matilda Martin, Agnes Thatcher's daughter. Mrs. Martin is over seventy years old, widowed, and runs what remains of the ranch. Treadwell uses Mrs. Martin to express a Romantic nostalgia for the West. The West was meant to represent the wild American spirit and entrepreneurship of all Americans, including women.<sup>139</sup> Manifest Destiny herself was represented in political cartoons as female.<sup>140</sup> The Thatcher women are the physical embodiment of this concept.

The play turns from nostalgic to bitter quickly with Mrs. Martin, who feels similarly to her son Elliott: foreigners are to blame for their state of poverty. In a speech that combines marriage, race, and poverty, Treadwell uses Mrs. Martin to illustrate how these intersect within Tonie. Tying marriage to race, Elliott went against his family and married Verna McCann, who was part- Native American. Her father owned a large portion of land that Elliott's family, the Martins/Thatchers, believed to be rightfully theirs. Elliott claims that Verna's land was an influence on his decision to marry her. Verna's non-Native heritage was Irish, inferred by the family name and cited by Tonie and Mrs.

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<sup>138</sup> Part of Thomas Postlewait's hermeneutic triangle which places the Agent (playwright), Event (play), and Possible Worlds (historical context) in dialogue with each other.

<sup>139</sup> Gale, Richard Anthony. "The American West as Playing Space: Theatrical Constructions of Landscape and Meaning." Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1996.  
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/304262649/abstract/885848DC782E4E3APQ/1>.

<sup>140</sup> "Milestones: 1830–1860 - Office of the Historian." Accessed November 20, 2017.  
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/foreword>.



Martin. The description Mrs. Martin gives of the McCann family, foreigners, and her daughter-in-law on page twenty six is not a pleasant one.

Mrs. Martin: You remember her mother, Lotta, don't you- Verna McCann? Don't you remember that old Irishman, Pat McCann, with the squaw wife and all the half-breed children that lived on the ranch and you grandfather could never get them off-

Lotta: I remember Tony McCann.

Mrs. Martin: That was his son. He was a half-breed and-

Elliott: (On the defensive) He married a very fine German woman and their girl was my wife.

Mrs. Martin: Squatters! - No-good squatters! They had no right to their land. It was part of our ranch and-<sup>141</sup>

In this one passage, the reader can see Mrs. Martin's disdain for Native Americans and what traits she associates with that ethnic minority. The large quantity of children is a comment upon both the Irish Catholic stereotype as well as the hyper-sexualization of the Native Americans. Mrs. Martin also insinuates a wild or deviant behavior of the "half-breed" children since Grandfather Thatcher could not remove the children from his land. The fact that she insists on referring to any mixed-race person as "half-breed" is demonstrative of her racism, let alone her reference to "the squaw wife". To add insult to injury, Mrs. Martin finishes her speech calling the McCann family squatters. This has the clear implication that Mrs. Martin does not believe that anyone in that family, Irish or Native, worked for a living.

This hate-filled speech does allow the reader/viewer to track Tonie's heritage. Her great-grandmother was Native American, her grandfather was half-Native, her mother was one quarter- Native, making Tonie only one eighth Native American. Treadwell gives this clear family history to prove a harsh point; even blood relatives do not dispel racism. Tonie's "one drop" disqualified her in the eyes of her own grandmother. The

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<sup>141</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 26.

racialized reading of Tonie's heritage as reflected by her family categorizes her in a way that allows systemic oppressions to affect Tonie's life.

The voice of reason comes from Treadwell's personae; Tonie and Lotta continually reiterate tolerance and the truth of American values, even when the more traditional characters refuse to hear it. During a spat with her father on page twenty one, Tonie reminds Elliott and her grandmother Mrs. Martin what it means to be American:

Elliott: ...Then let you marry this Dago- this-

Tonie: Dago? He's one of the finest boys in the country. He's-

Mrs. Martin: He's a foreigner!

Tonie: He's not. He was born here- he went to school here- he-

Elliott: His folks were foreigners- just common immigrants-

Tonie: And what were ours?

Elliott: (Astonished) Ours!

Mrs. Martin: We're Americans. You got good blood on your father's side- Scotch and English.

Tonie: Got good blood on my mother's side too- Irish and Indian!

Elliott: (Voice rising) No more of that, young lady.<sup>142</sup>

Tonie's self-reflection is not welcomed by her father or grandmother. This passage also proves the ethnic heritage of Tonie. What is interesting about this back and forth is Elliott's denial. He silences his daughter, indicating that her acceptance of mixed heritage will not be tolerated. Tonie on the other hand stresses that being American is not restricted to those of Anglo descent; since Victor was born in the United States and schooled in the U.S., he should be respected as American as well. She is brazen enough to acknowledge that her ancestry on both sides is that of immigrants, expressing the fact that America is a country built on immigration.

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<sup>142</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 21.

The “harvest” aspect of the play is not only for the ranch, it is embodied by Tonie’s pregnancy and her decision on whether she should keep the child. Lotta speaks of fertility to Tonie regarding a woman’s body. “After a certain age” pregnancy is not a viable option for women.<sup>143</sup> Lotta missed her chance and she appears to want to sway Tonie into keeping the child. Since Lotta is remaining at the ranch and is attempting to make the land fertile, it is an easy parallel to draw between the two women. The fertility of the land and the aim for a good harvest is used as a metaphor for a woman’s body bearing fruit.

However, the female body is treated differently based on race. Tonie’s cousin Lotta sees Tonie as a young girl who could bear children and isolates the gendered part of Tonie’s identity away from the other aspects of her intersectionality that affect her. Lotta continually admonishes Elliott for speaking negatively about minorities and never refers to Tonie’s mixed heritage. Other women in the play see Tonie as a sexual liability since they negatively combine race and gender using stereotyped societal roles. In Act Two, Billie’s mother Bertha discusses with Lotta why she does not want her son associating with Tonie.

Bertha: I won’t let Billie go with her. She’s just not good enough for him. It’s not easy for me to say of course, but Tonie is just as fly as she can be.... I’m not going to have her out in my new car with Billie, parking with him up some dark road- you know what that means.... I’m not going to have him mixed up with Tonie. Why, she’s dynamite. ...

Lotta: She is a strange little thing- so sort of wise in some ways, yet so childish.

Bertha: That’s the Indian in her. Indians are all like that.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 103.

<sup>144</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 71.

Bertha's perspective on Tonie's sexuality is clear; Tonie is "fly as she can be". The emphasis Bertha places on Tonie's Native American heritage is indicative of the common racialized stereotype of Native people at the time. Tonie has not acted unlike any other girl her age; she mentions several other girls going out in cars for "petting", including the girl Bertha is encouraging her son to date, Irma Belding. The differences between Tonie and Irma are racial and economic, both of which are important to Bertha. Irma is given Bertha's respect because her parents are bankers, they live in town, and Irma is white. Tonie's farming status and "Indian" blood place her in a separate category from the likes of Irma.

Tonie is "dynamite", implying an explosiveness to her personality that is dangerous to be around. Little does Bertha know that it was her son who encouraged Tonie to engage in sexual activities that resulted in pregnancy, not the other way around. Neither Bertha nor Billie is informed of the consequences of Billie's actions by the end of the play, suggesting that they will never know.

Victor, Tonie's marriage suitor, is told by Tonie about the pregnancy in Act Three. Victor's subsequent rejection of Tonie is unsurprising, yet tragic since Tonie yells after Victor that she will get rid of the child to marry him. Victor refuses this offer, stating that it Tonie is no longer "straight."<sup>145</sup> The two warring opinions of female sexuality put onto Tonie's body creates her tragic situation. On one side, Billie wants Tonie to behave like the other girls, but these actions make Tonie ineligible for marriage. Men, such as Billie, are permitted to engage in sexual activities with no consequence.

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<sup>145</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 84.

Tonie, and women in general, must bear the physical and psychological consequences for the rest of her life.

Part of Tonie's gendered treatment is also reflected in the educational differences between her and her two suitors. Bertha, while despairing Tonie's lack of education to Lotta, mentions that Billie did not pass the examination to get into college. Yet her son deserves to "go with nice people", meaning persons of Anglo descent who live in town and work as bankers instead of farmers.<sup>146</sup> A critic for *Time* complimented this specific theme, saying that "the play has sound points to make about people who 'want something for nothing,'" clearly referring to the Barnes family.<sup>147</sup> Their privilege comes through as the mother makes sweeping remarks on what her family should be entitled to, particularly her son. Billie, a white male who marries well by the end of the dramatic action, will never bear the consequences of his actions or even know there were any. This juxtaposition to Tonie demonstrates the oppressive effects of intersectionality upon women of color.

The irony of the gendered dichotomy between Tonie and Billie is played out by Mrs. Martin, Tonie's grandmother. Mrs. Martin tells Lotta how Billie is a "modern flippity jippities" and has taken to collecting "brazeers".<sup>148</sup> She continues her assault on his character on the next page exclaiming, "Spoiled! They want to make a big shot out of him!... No use to give a ten-thousand-dollar education to a ten-cent boy!"<sup>149</sup> Billie can

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<sup>146</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 70.

<sup>147</sup> "New Play in Manhattan." *Time* 38, no. 23 (December 8, 1941): 41. *Academic Search Alumni Edition*, EBSCOhost.

<sup>148</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 35.

<sup>149</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 36.

continue with his behavior and even be rewarded with an education that he may not deserve or even have the smarts to obtain. This is an obvious nod to Treadwell's disdain for the patriarchal system that places boys' education over that of girls.

Victor's education is a hot-button topic as well. He was sent to a Catholic school by his parents to become a priest. The fact that both families of the boys were willing to send their sons to further education to ensure vocational work is in direct contrast to Tonie's educational track. The religious part of his education also suggests a cleanliness to Victor that Tonie is now stripped of. Victor's devotion to the church, where he could have a promising career as a deacon, is put in jeopardy by a young pregnant woman of color.

His father, Joe Delucchi, makes it clear that he does not desire his son to be acquainted with Tonie, an American girl. He believes that Tonie, like all American girls, does not work. In act three scene one, Mr. Delucchi tells Lotta that he does not feel bad for Tonie since "she's spoiled".<sup>150</sup> He believes that all American girls have a mentality against work. "She think- I'm a girl- I'm wonderful. I no gotta work- I no gotta cook- I no gotta have kids- I no gotta do nothing- I'm a girl".<sup>151</sup> While impressing upon the audience that immigrants had a working mentality, it also indicates a greater social construct: women were expected to cook, bear children, and work if the family needed it.

Unbeknownst to Mr. Delucchi, Tonie has ambition. Elliott, Tonie's father, allows Tonie to help a local man work on engines. Tonie expresses her desire to become a pilot and Elliott even appears proud that the mechanic, Al, calls Tonie a "genius".<sup>152</sup> However,

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<sup>150</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 105.

<sup>151</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 105.

due to both economic stress and gender discrimination, Tonie is not encouraged to pursue her dream. Elliott cannot afford to send his only child to any type of further schooling. With this combination of socio-economic class and gender, Tonie's intersectionality strips her of her dreams.

### **Play in Performance**

The show played in April regionally at the New Haven Theatre in Boston for tryouts.<sup>153</sup> The Guild Theatre housed the Broadway performances of *Hope for a Harvest* in 1941.<sup>154</sup> The reception complemented the casting selection but gave a lackluster review of the writing. "Of the two decisions, the casting one is the happier; - 'Hope for a Harvest' presents the spectacle of a mediocre piece of writing admirably exploited within its narrow limits by a popular cast."<sup>155</sup> The popular cast the reviewer refers to is the leading couple, Fredric March and Florence Eldridge. March was well known on the silver screen for his Academy-Award-winning performance in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932). Eldridge had been on Broadway since the age of seventeen, and even ventured into Hollywood herself, joining March, her husband, for the 1935 film version of *Les Misérables*.<sup>156</sup> Surprisingly, the critics of both the Boston run and the Broadway showings favored the gentleman playing Mr. Delucchi. Alan Reed, later the original voice of Fred Flintstone, garnered the best reviews and the most quotations in the

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<sup>152</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 26.

<sup>153</sup> "Fredric March 'HOPE FOR A HARVEST' Florence Eldridge."

<sup>154</sup> "Hope for a Harvest Broadway @ Guild Theatre - Tickets and Discounts." Playbill. Accessed November 19, 2017. <http://www.playbill.com/production/hope-for-a-harvest-guild-theatre-vault-0000005347>. This is the playbill.

<sup>155</sup> R.C.H. "The Playgoer." News. *The Harvard Crimson*. Accessed November 20, 2017. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1941/4/14/the-playgoer-pfor-the-fifth-in/>.

<sup>156</sup> Kronenberger, Louis. *The Best Plays Of..* New York: Dodd Mead, 1899. <http://archive.org/details/bestplays02goog.2>.

newspapers for his depiction of Delucchi. “There is a long list of excellent characterizations headed by that of the Italian truck-grower, Alan Reed.” The actor had a consistent complaint about the show; he hated his costume. “So what happens? I get into ‘Hope for a Harvest,’ and I wear overalls! Can you win? But outside of that I got no complaints. It's a swell show. I got a swell part. I'm happy.”<sup>157</sup>

What the critics seemed to like the least about the production was the writing itself. Before Broadway, *The Crimson* reported a lack of depth within the playwriting but thought it still a pleasant evening.

Despite its deficiencies in depth--by no means an uncommon failing of play writing in this confused age when most authors seem either unable or afraid to go to the heart of the questions they ask--"Hope for a Harvest" is certainly not an unpleasant evening. With the assistance of a good share of varied talent it should go Marching along well into the end of the season.

However, *Time*'s critics got out the claws once the play moved to Broadway: “The play has sound points to make about people who "want something for nothing," but its pulpit manner is a bore and its Santa Claus ending a betrayal.”<sup>158</sup> It gets worse as the magazine questions the material given for the great talent of March, saying that *Harvest* “brought Fredric March from Hollywood to Broadway, but for no good reason.”<sup>159</sup>

*The Herald Tribune* touched on the thematic elements of the play in an illuminating way; Richard Watts Jr. places the significance of the play in how the playwright looked to change her surroundings and her country through drama.

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<sup>157</sup> “Alan Reed He’s On Vacation and That Makes Him Pretty Happy.” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Brooklyn, New York. November 23, 1945. 45. Accessed November 20, 2017. <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/52799184/>.

<sup>158</sup> R.H.C. “The Playgoer.”

<sup>159</sup> R.H.C. “The Playgoer.”



Because “Hope for a Harvest” has something of importance to say, and says it with unmistakable sincerity, one has from the start a sympathetic concern with it and a far deeper respect for its heart and mind than for far more expert dramas of a lesser integrity. It really is striving to speak to the soul of America with gravity and idealistic fervor. The unfortunate thing is that in expressing the author's heartfelt interest in the future of the nation in a time of desperate crisis the play goes in for some unpersuasive and undramatic theatrical matters which destroy the greater part of its effectiveness.<sup>160</sup>

Watts touches on the crux of this chapter; Treadwell attempted to convey identity politics to an America struggling with immigration and economic depression. His review demonstrates that a politicized message of the play was acknowledged by at least one audience member. However, I believe he may have read a very different political message from a contemporary reading of the play. The final line speaks of the future of the nation as Treadwell's concern, which is the theme of Lotta's plot line. Lotta interacts with the mechanization of farming, failing crops, and economic hardship for an American citizen who is willing to work hard to achieve the American Dream. The “unpersuasive and undramatic theatrical matters” sound like Lotta's attempts to tone down her racist cousin Elliott to foster a more empathetic environment. If that is the case, Watts has deemed Lotta's words, and Treadwell's attempt, insufficient to sway her audience.

The play, along with most entertainment in December of 1941, folded.<sup>161</sup> On December 7, Japanese forces carried out a surprise bombing mission on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The devastation quickly converted into a national call

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<sup>160</sup> Kronenberger, *The Best Plays Of .. 2*.

<sup>161</sup> “August Wilson Theatre | Playbill.” Accessed November 19, 2017. <http://www.playbill.com/venue/august-wilson-theatre-vault-0000000162>. History of the venue including production history.

to arms, leading the United States directly into World War II. The impact this event had on Broadway and the entertainment industry would last years. *Harvest* closed after only 38 performances, two weeks after Pearl Harbor.<sup>162</sup>

*Harvest* had just moved to a larger theatre to accommodate increased audience numbers in early December. The Guild Theatre, now the August Wilson Theatre, had not been terribly successful with other plays in the 1941 season, with most shows closing at under 50 performances a run.<sup>163</sup> With *Harvest* looking so promising, the gamble to move the production from the Booth to a larger theatre might have paid off had the US remained out of the war. However, audiences did not attend Broadway in the weeks following Pearl Harbor, forcing the Great White Way to go dark. The thousand-seat Guild Theatre closed *Harvest* on December 27, 1941.<sup>164</sup>

No matter what the “lukewarm reviews” may have said, the play earned a place on the Top Ten plays of 1941 list.<sup>165</sup>

### **Analysis**

Similar to Winnifred Eaton’s *A Japanese Nightingale*, *Hope for a Harvest* began its creative life as a novel. Treadwell restructured the novel for the stage and to update the text since the novel was published in 1937.<sup>166</sup> This implies that Treadwell worked on the text before the publishing date, placing the writing back to the mid-1930’s, at the peak of what would later be called the Great Depression.

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<sup>162</sup> “August Wilson Theatre | Playbill.”

<sup>163</sup> “August Wilson Theatre | Playbill.”

<sup>164</sup> “Hope for a Harvest Broadway @ Guild Theatre - Tickets and Discounts.”

<sup>165</sup> “*Machinal*”, Sophie Treadwell. *Blood on the Stage*. 220.

<sup>166</sup> Dickey 102.

The most notable difference between the novel and the play is the addition of a female character. In Treadwell's original novel, Carlotta had the racial composition and gender complications that Antoinette does in the play.<sup>167</sup> I believe that Treadwell divided these two characters for two reasons. The first is time, enabling Treadwell to keep the play up to date socially and politically. The second delves into Treadwell's personal identity politics as represented through dialogue between her two identities: her older, public identity and her younger past.

Treadwell worked on this novel, and then the play, for years. Two world wars changed the political landscape greatly during her creative process. As Treadwell grew in fame, her Broadway work and successful novels included the "half-breed" character, but never placed it at the center, until *Hope for a Harvest* the novel. Treadwell herself became an advocate for women and people of mixed heritage through her creative work. Her identity changed with time; she was "passing", meaning that Treadwell was viewed as white because her appearance was more Anglo, which meant that the few people who knew her heritage were close to her and her public image was maintained as white. Knowing her past however, one can see the projection of Treadwell's self onto both Tonie and Lotta.

Tonie is the child who endures the derision of her own family, just as Treadwell did. The audience is informed of her complex identity through given circumstances throughout the play. With each interaction with Tonie, another part of her identity is emphasized or revealed. This information or emphasis is dependent upon who is on stage. For example, as cited above, Bertha Barnes emphasizes Tonie's "dynamite" personality

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<sup>167</sup> Dickey 229.

and “Indian” heritage. The dialogue is structured to deliver conflict and information to the audience while remaining somewhat realistic. Bertha is speaking to Lotta, who knows about Tonie’s various personality traits, but the messenger-like recitation Bertha gives Lotta is expository and hence intended for the audience. Treadwell is using the exchange to show how two similar women look at the same girl but with starkly different opinions. Bertha represents American societal norms that place “otherness” at a disadvantage because she believes that “otherness” may cause harm to her and/or her child Billie. In response, Treadwell gives the audience the calm-headed Lotta who very politely responds to blatant racism with comments about Tonie’s actual personality. Lotta speaks to Tonie’s identity without regard to race or sexuality. In this way, Treadwell asks the audience to treat individuals not through the aspects of identity that one cannot control such as race, sexuality, class, and gender.

Lotta is Treadwell’s older self, speaking to “fellow whites” about the humanity within each person regardless of race. Lotta also embodies the white part of Treadwell’s identity that she could never fully claim but was forced to aspire to by both her mother directly, and indirectly by society. This character affords Treadwell the opportunity to educate her audience by presenting them with a woman who refuses to give in to stereotyping. Lotta corrects Elliott repeatedly throughout the play, requesting that he stop using racial slurs such as Dago and Jap. For example in Act Two Lotta says, “Oh Elliot! This Dago business. It’s so cheap and insulting—and ignorant.”<sup>168</sup> By the final scene, Elliott has changed his opinion of his Italian neighbors, even allowing his daughter to marry Victor Delucchi. He drops “Dago” from his vernacular entirely in the end. But

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<sup>168</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 90.

such work takes time; Elliott may have been convinced by Lotta that “Dago” is not appropriate, but that does not stop his degrading of Japanese persons.<sup>169</sup>

These diegetic scenes were for a specific moment in American history that discussed American values. During the run of this production, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. This single event shifted not only the course of American history, but it also reinforced racial tensions between white Americans and the Japanese. Japanese heritage became a liability for those living in the United States. Thousands were forced into internment camps in an attempt to abate potential Japanese loyalists. Minimal evidence was ever found of Japanese persons aiding the Axis powers. These camps isolated the ethnic minority from the rest of the country, which helped to perpetuate racial biases. The Japanese were not alone in the camps; Italian Americans and German Americans were also arrested, placed in camps, or put under surveillance.<sup>170</sup> The new alliance between the Thatcher/Martin family and the Delucchis would have been tested during the remainder of the war.

The play would be reproduced in 1943, however audiences were no longer keen to see it. Critics blamed the anti-American writing for the lack of interest. “The bombing of Pearl Harbor effectively ended audiences abilities to sympathize with its social critique of America’s changing mores” the special collections at Arizona states on their website.<sup>171</sup> From my readings, I agree; Lotta’s sympathetic view of “Japs” was in direct opposition to the war effort and therefore against American public interest.

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<sup>169</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 125.

<sup>170</sup> Brandon, Michael. "Legal Control over Resident Enemy Aliens in Time of War." *American Journal of International Law* 44 (1950): 382. Brandon, "Legal Control over Resident Enemy Aliens in Time of War."

<sup>171</sup> "The Stockton Ranch and Hope for a Harvest." Arizona State University. Accessed November 19, 2017. <http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/treadwell/StocktonRanch.htm>.

Carlotta Thatcher has far-reaching impact in the play overall, not just on Elliott. Her ultimate role as caregiver and nurturer can be seen in every scene she is in, particularly those with Tonie. Their relationship is a unique one that is not a true mother/daughter relationship. Lotta is the only character in her generation who does not comment on Tonie's heritage.<sup>172</sup>

Instead of basing their relationship along racial lines, Lotta and Tonie interact on a gendered level, as shown above with their discussion pertaining to the societal expectation of bearing children. Their interactions tend to revolve around gender expectations for the bulk of the play, illustrating warring opinions that Treadwell would have faced in the late 1930's. The two discuss Lotta's need for an employee to help her with housework, hopefully to employ Tonie for the task. Once Tonie agrees, she begs Lotta not to tell anyone that she is doing such lowly work as housework since "They'd all look down on me".<sup>173</sup> Her fear of being placed in an even lower class than her present one is noted by Lotta, who transforms the work into a gendered requirement. "But what is finer for a girl than to know how to make a home?". Tonie, Treadwell's younger self, speaks of her aspirations to become "an aviator some day- maybe". Lotta, Treadwell's older self gently reminds Tonie of her feminine obligations by responding, "But an aviator has to have a home."<sup>174</sup>

This interaction is again indicative of how the social categorization of Tonie sets up multiple oppressions that she must confront on a person-to-person basis. Lotta, as

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<sup>172</sup> Billie and Victor, Tonie's suitors, do not comment on ethnicity at all. This may be Treadwell demonstrating how younger generations were more accepting than their parents.

<sup>173</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 102.

<sup>174</sup> Treadwell, *Harvest*. 102.

Treadwell's older and "passing" self, does not deal in racialized terms as Treadwell participated in "whiteness". By doing so, Treadwell eliminated the stigmatization of multi-ethnicity and allowed the part of her that struggled with this piece of identity, Tonie, to be told by her older self, Lotta, that it gets easier.

The socio-economic concerns Tonie and her beau will have been also part of the systemic oppressions they will have to endure. Providing a true glimmer of hope, the audience learns in the final moments that Elliott will give his service station to the young couple, Victor and Tonie, implying that they will raise a family and earn a living with the land from their joined families and the service station. While this means that Tonie and her child will be provided for, the audience understands that Tonie's dreams of becoming an aviator will never be realized.

Both of these plots are realized within Treadwell's own life. Although she never bore a child, she adopted a boy from Germany after World War II. This was after her husband, famous sports journalist William McGeehan, passed away. Treadwell becomes Tonie, longing from a young age to enter a predominately male occupation, journalism. Treadwell gained considerable success in her field, unlike Tonie whose untimely pregnancy stunted her capability to pursue aviation. After her career, and even after her husband died, Treadwell chose to become a mother. This is similar to Lotta, who after many years and after her artist husband dies, cultivates the land around her to restore the fertility of the farm. The farm becomes her "child": a growing, living thing to care for.

## Conclusion

The link among these three dramatic works is the similar intersectional identity of the leading characters and their relationship to the authoresses. The expression of the self through playwriting is evident in each play since the ethnic identities of these characters match that of the playwright. It is also evident that these pieces were written in an attempt to advocate for an identity yet to be addressed by the American public. *Nightingale* presents a version of the original intersectional vision of Eaton in that it maintains gendered, racial, economic and sexualized conflicts even if those conflicts do not encompass an intensely specific racialized debate of biracialism. *Rachel* firmly states its purpose of educating audiences about the struggles of persons of color, specifically women and families who endure racialized and gendered prejudices. Of these three plays, *Harvest* is perhaps the play that addresses such issues most explicitly by staging racialized and gendered debates between two characters.

This thesis was done in part for my own curiosity. I wanted to see how to apply sociological theory to performance. What I have found are the subjectivities that are/were embedded in society regarding race, gender, social class, and sexuality. At different moments, these aspects affected each other differently within a single character. These identity signifiers had different meanings to different characters within the same moment.

This conclusion became crystal clear in *Harvest*. The treatment of Tonie depended on who was speaking to her. Her father held prejudice against her due to her ethnic heritage despite having married her mother. Billie, a white suitor, never mentions Tonie's heritage since the only aspects of her identity he desires are her gender and



sexuality. Lotta, her white cousin, does not mention her race, but does emphasize a woman's gendered role. These separate pulls against Tonie occur in every scene she is in, demonstrating her performed intersectionality as a foil against those who were deemed majoritarian.

By using Postlewait's method of historiography, the application of Crenshaw's groundbreaking theory of intersectionality to Yuki, Rachel, and Lotta/Tonie, it became apparent that the interconnected nature of their multiple oppressions was in dialogue both onstage and with the audience. Through the historical context, textual analysis, contemporary reviews, and an autobiographical feminist perspective, the construction of these characters could be illuminated to a fuller effect. Each aspect of identity could be expressed in this way, without marginalizing one facet and emphasizing another.

However, one of these facets was unique even to intersectionality. The added element of these three plays is the biracialism of the leading female character, creating yet another intersection of identity. This aspect was removed by the first production, placed under wraps in the second, and then addressed in the third after that same playwright had made several attempts to write the character. The changing landscape in society over the thirty years in between the first and third productions contributes to the ability of Treadwell to construct her play with a complex ethnic debate at the forefront of the drama.

This thesis has led to only more questions for me. How can performance change the socio-political discussion around race? How has female participation in theatre been suppressed? Why were these women vocal through self-representative

performance? Were other multi-ethnic women writing whose work never made it to the stage?

As evidenced by these plays, all of which were written over seventy years ago, these questions are not new. This is, in part, why I believe the plays were not successful. American audiences did not want to participate in societal discussions of miscegenation until years later.<sup>175</sup> The patriarchal discourse present in these productions must have ruffled a few feathers as well.

Now that society has taken great steps forward with regard to civil rights, I hope we can finally discuss these concerns. These plays placed intersectionality in front of audiences that were unprepared to examine the consequences of intersectional identity. It cost them greatly; these plays are nearly lost to time due to short runs. *Nightingale* is nearly lost entirely. It is time to take back these figures from the attic of theatre history and place them in their own special collection; women ahead of their time who presented intersectional identities, particularly biracialism, long before the term would be coined.

It is my hope that this thesis gives a voice to these women who attempted to alter societal opinion through art. These women, be they the playwrights or the characters they constructed, persevered though the societal deck was stacked against them. My dream is that these women will be read and understood by scholars as pioneers of what it means to explore intersectionality in theatre.

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<sup>175</sup> A wave of repeals began in 1947, slowly ending anti-miscegenation laws state by state until 1967 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Loving v. Virginia* that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional.

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